Chapter 1
Brings Riches—at a Price

Foundation support for schools
First books on reform
Board's systemwide reform plan
Opportunity still unequal

One would not have thought that children in America would ever have to choose between a teacher or a playground or sufficient toilet paper. Like grain in a time of famine, the immense resources which the nation does in fact possess go not to the child in the greatest need but to the child of the highest bidder—the child of parents who, more frequently than not, have also enjoyed the same abundance when they were schoolchildren.

"A caste society," wrote U.S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel 25 years ago, "violates the style of American democracy....The nation in effect does not have a truly public school system in a large part of its communities; it has permitted what is in effect a private school system to develop under public auspices....Equality of educational opportunity throughout the nation continues today for many to be more a myth than a reality." This statement is as true today as it was at the time when it was written. For all the rhetoric of school reform that we have heard in recent years, there are no indications that this is about to change.

Jonathan Kozol
Savage Inequalities

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2. State Chapter 1 brings riches—at a price
   A look at the big picture, with four school spending profiles by Lorraine V. Forte

8. Foundations rise to reform but commitment unclear
   An analysis by Stephen K. Clements

13. Opinions

38. Reviews
   First books on reform tell different tales by John E. Corbally

42. Updates
   Systemwide reform plan, teacher ‘bumping’

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

19. Letters

20. Diaries

40. Bright Ideas

49. Bulletins
State Chapter 1 brings riches — at a price

by Lorraine V. Forte

At Byrd Community Academy, 363 W. Hill, Principal Janis Todds says she "absolutely couldn't do without" the $250,000 in state Chapter 1 money her school received this year.

It has paid for extras that Byrd's regular budget could not begin to provide: a second full-time guidance counselor, a full-time art teacher, science lab equipment, classroom libraries, video equipment and staff development programs.

At DuSable High School, 4934 S. Wabash, Principal Charles E. Mingo tells a similar story. This year, DuSable will get a new reading specialist and a new assistant principal to oversee curriculum development. "We need someone to visit teachers during class, talk about new teaching methods, etc.," says Mingo.

Other uses of DuSable's $584,000 include a computer lab for reading and math enrichment and electronic database research, additional testing at the beginning and the end of the school year, an in-school store where students learn the basics of running a business, teacher aides (one of whom runs the school's attendance program) and field trips and other activities aimed at building students' self-esteem.

As the examples of Byrd and DuSable show, state Chapter 1 money has become the fuel for reform, particularly at schools with large numbers of low-income students.

State Chapter 1 refers to hundreds of millions of dollars Illinois school districts receive from the state because they enroll low-income pupils. Under a provison of the Chicago School Reform Act, control of state Chapter 1 in Chicago is being shifted from the central administration to local schools, which may use it only for supplemental programs.

This year every school is receiving an extra $550 for each low-income student, which amounts to roughly 10 percent of average per-pupil funding in Chicago. The $550 is up from $393 per pupil last school year.

But with virtually static school revenues, state Chapter 1 has become a two-edged sword. As the Board of Education shifts the money to local control, it has had to cut elsewhere to balance its budget. That creates a dilemma at many schools: They want to replace cuts in regular programs but are not supposed to use state Chapter 1.
"It would be great if all the money came to us for real supplemental activities," says Donna Macey, principal of Lake View High School, 4015 N. Ashland. "But we have very basic needs that children have to have met [and] we end up paying for them [out of state Chapter 1]."

Presumably, the board will have to cut still more to provide employee raises. As a result, Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough is eyeing state Chapter 1 as a temporary source of revenue for basic programs. Reformers are gearing up to fight.

Meanwhile, other issues have cropped up. Some officials question whether schools are using their new money wisely. And some principals would like spending restrictions lifted.

**Controversial from the start**

State Chapter 1 was born in 1973, not long after Illinois adopted a state income tax and at a time when educators were advocating more spending in poor schools.

"We looked at it as a means to get more money to meet the high cost of educating children from disadvantaged areas," recalls State Sen. Emil Jones of the Far South Side, then a freshman legislator.

In 1973, legislators revised the state funding formula so that districts with low-income students would receive additional money. But suburban legislators insisted on limits. The legislation initially provided that districts could count no more than 75 percent of their students as low-income—even if low-income students made up more than 75 percent of their enrollment; legislators subsequently dropped the limit to 62 percent. With 70 percent to 80 percent of its students coming from low-income homes, Chicago gets short-changed.

"It was strictly a political thing, [done] by legislators who didn't want to see all that money going to Chicago," recalls one observer.

Controversy erupted in 1976, when the Chicago Urban League, black members of the Board of Education and others confirmed their suspicions that the board was spreading the poverty funds throughout the system rather than directing them at low-income students. The league filed suit against the board in 1978. Later that year, legislators, led by Jones, amended the law to require school districts "in cities over 500,000"—namely, Chicago—to earmark 60 percent of Chapter 1 for schools with low-income children. The remainder could go into the board's general revenue pot.

But the amendment still didn't accomplish what its promoters wanted. The board used most of the 60 percent to pay for such basics as kindergartens and libraries. Further, almost 20 percent of the money supposedly targeted for low-income students was used to pay for central office staff, according to a study by the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.

State Chapter 1 tide
State aid to Chicago schools

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Chapter 1</th>
<th>General aid</th>
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<td>97-98</td>
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Source: Board of Education

The practice wasn't illegal but was "clearly contrary to the intent of the law...and [was] to the benefit of more affluent students," the Panel said.

In 1988, the reform movement succeeded where earlier efforts had failed: It wrote sweeping revisions of Chapter 1 into the Chicago School Reform Act. First, Chapter 1 funds would be distributed to individual schools on the basis of low-income enrollment; in other words, money would "follow the child." Second, funds could be spent only on supplemental, not basic, programs in six general categories. Third, principals were to take the lead in developing spending plans, with local school council approval.

The school targeting would be done over five years, beginning with 20 percent in 1989-90 and adding another 20 percent each year thereafter. Thus, $82 million was carved out of the regular budget in 1989-90, another $38 million in 1990-91 and another $53 million this school year. (The second two increments were lower than the first because state aid decreased, in response to increasing property tax revenues.)

By 1993-94, schools will have more than $300 million to spend as they wish on early childhood instruction, reduced class size, student enrichment, attendance improvement, remedial education and other areas, such as staff and curriculum development. That means $300 million less for the board to spend on basic board expenditures, mainly salaries required by union contracts.

However, with scant new revenue coming into the system and employees pushing for significant raises, schools are paying a price for the seeming windfall. The first year of the
phase-in, the board filled the hole left in its regular budget largely by cutting some $40 million from central and district offices. (Additional money from the state helped.) The second year, the board won legislation permitting it to use teacher pension funds for employee raises, which eased required budget cuts.

This year, the board eliminated more central office positions but also closed out teaching positions and cut other school resources. For example, the new Chapter 1 funds freed this year more than equal cuts made in supplies and equipment, new reform and desegregation programs, high school teaching positions and special education summer school. (For a critique of the board’s choice of budget cuts, see Opinions, page 18.)

And still unresolved is where the board will find money to pay for some $78 million in employee raises agreed to last year by the Interim Board of Education.

Kimbrough has said he will seek the Legislature’s approval for tapping some $22 million in 1991-92 state Chapter 1 funds that schools did not use. (Under the reform act, schools are allowed to carry over unspent Chapter 1 funds from one year to the next.) Reformers are mobilizing to prevent the diversion; some fear they will be fighting the Chicago Teachers Union as well as Kimbrough.

CTU spokesperson Jackie Gallagher says the union has “no official or unofficial agreement with the board” to go after the Chapter 1 money.

Regardless, says Ron Sistrunk executive director of the Citywide Coalition for School Reform, the threat of a teachers strike will make it difficult to defeat the proposal. “That’s why we’re starting now, so legislators are clear on this—do not touch Chapter 1, no matter what the appeal is from the board.” Reformers stopped a similar drive last summer. At that time, Sen. Jones, a longtime champion of targeted Chapter 1 funds, sought to keep school-controlled state Chapter 1 at last year’s level and resume the phase-in next school year.

“If you cut library services, art, gym and music [as the board threatened], all children are hurt,” says Jones. “If Chapter 1 can be used to help keep those programs in place, it benefits all children.” Acknowledging that Chapter 1 is meant to supplement the basics, he asks: “After so many cuts, what is the line you are going to supplement?”

While reformers fault the board for not making more administrative cuts, those alone will not solve the increasing problem posed by the Chapter 1 phase-in.

“Even if you cut 400 more people, you’d only save $9 million or $10 million,” notes Cameron Clark, an accountant for the Chicago School Finance Authority, which oversees the board’s finances.

Problem getting bigger

By 1993-94, school-controlled Chapter 1 will be more than $300 million. (See chart on page 3.) In 1988, reformers believed that “somehow they’d cut $300 million of bloat” to make up the difference, says another Authority consultant.

“But I don’t know how anyone thought there was $300 million of bloat to cut.”

Meanwhile, Sen. Jones says, his plan is “to get more [state] money for the schools.” In the last session, he won Senate passage of a bill to increase the school property tax rate, but the Senate quickly reversed itself under pressure from Mayor Richard M. Daley, according to published reports.

As policymakers debate the intricacies of Chapter 1 finance, schools are enjoying new resources. More than
4,000 new positions—mainly teachers and teacher aides—have been opened since schools began taking control of Chapter 1 funds. This year, 1,238 teachers, aides and other staff were hired with Chapter 1 money. (See chart on page 4.)

Many schools would like to use some of Chapter 1 to restore services and materials lost to the board’s budget cutting. But the law doesn’t allow it. “We’ve made it clear to the board and to the schools that if they cut the supply budget or art and music, schools won’t be allowed to pick it up out of Chapter 1,” says Dan Dixon, head of the reform review office of the Illinois State Board of Education. “Once a program is regular and basic in one year, it can’t be cut the next year [and replaced with Chapter 1].”

Some schools are skirting the regulation, though. One principal confessed that she spent part of her money on textbooks: “You shouldn’t have to [use it for basics], but the reality is, it happens.” Others say it’s common practice, when more money is requested for basics, to have board officials tell them, “Use your Chapter 1.”

The state tries to be diligent about ferreting out such practices, says Dixon, noting it found one school that tried to buy a car and others that tried to use the money for building repairs. The state reviews budgets, rejecting those with improper plans, and annually visits at least 15 percent of the city’s schools to verify Chapter 1 spending. Last year, state staffers visited 106 schools; a report is due out soon.

Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel, believes the state should ease up, however. If fixing windows, for example, is what it takes to improve the environment in a school, the school should be allowed to use state Chapter 1 to fix windows, he argues. “The philosophy behind the pro-

Continued on page 48

School budgets

Bare bones to bonanza

Seward Elementary

A bit nervously, Carlos Martinez reads his student council campaign speech to fellow eighth-graders at Seward Elementary School. It is a practice run before an upcoming schoolwide assembly. Gaining confidence, he proudly concludes: “Vote for Carlos Martinez because I am the man for this job.”

Teacher Rhonda Jackson nods with approval. “That’s a good ending,” she says. “But what would be a better lead-in? Maybe something like, ‘Let me tell you a little bit about myself.’”

Another young candidate barely looks up from the page as she reads her speech. “Your eye contact was excellent before,” says Jackson. “What happened?”

“I forgot my lines because I rewrote them,” the girl replies. Jackson reassures her: “OK, that’s going to happen. Just remember you need to always make eye contact with the audience.”

Jackson is one of nine extra teachers Seward, 4600 S. Hermitage, has hired with more than $800,000 in Chapter 1 money. Seward’s Chapter 1 allotment is among the highest in the city because of its large student body—1,500 students, equal to many high schools—and its high percentage of low-income students, over 90 percent.

Jackson is coordinating the new language arts program, which emphasizes oral as well as written skills. “I’d like to have the children become more open, more verbal, not so afraid to talk to teachers and other adults,” says Jackson, who has a background in drama and speech.
So far, she has ambitious plans: a school literary magazine, a writing fair, a special program for students who show particular writing talent, oratory and essay contests and writing workshops for teachers "not only for language arts, but for any kind of writing kids are doing in any subject," she explains.

Seward is predominantly Hispanic, and while many children don't need a bilingual program, they do need reinforcement in vocabulary and oral language skills, Principal Christine Speiser explains. "They're affected by being surrounded at home by a language that isn't their school language."

Speiser works closely with the Seward's professional personnel advisory committee to come up with Chapter 1 spending ideas. Jackson's position was one the PPAC suggested.

Says eighth-grade teacher Robert Fabian, "I can step right over (to Jackson's office), get an idea, or she can come over and give me help right away. That proximity really helps."

Chapter 1 also is paying for community services coordinator Marina Rey, who makes home visits, talks to parents about school programs and activities and refers parents and families to outside agencies when they need help.

She notes several success stories. One mother wouldn't buy glasses for her little girl, saying they were too expensive and would spoil the child's looks. Rey convinced her that "this was something that was needed for her [daughter] to do well in school" and arranged for a community group to pay for them.

Another student was successfully steered away from gangs with the help of tutoring and outside counseling. Now, says Rey, "He's doing really well. It's amazing, but I haven't had any bad reports about him."

Pat Mallon, a math and science coordinator, is another Chapter 1 addition. Last year, Mallon got fourth- and fifth-grade students to participate in the school science fair for the first time. And student test scores improved slightly over the year before, Mallon says.

Chapter 1 also pays for two reading teachers, full-time art and music teachers, two teachers to reduce bilingual class size in seventh and eighth grade, nine teacher aides and an extra school clerk. New programs include extracurricular activities (a basketball team, cheerleading squad and bowling league), an extended-day program and summer school.

The extended-day program runs for 10 weeks, during which classes run an extra hour Monday through Thursday. It was piloted two years ago and, says Speiser, "Teachers and kids loved it. They said it gave them time to breathe, time to concentrate [on schoolwork] without rushing through the day."

Speiser fears, though, that the extended-day, summer school and extracurricular programs may have to be cut to free up money for raises teachers may get. "Teachers are my first priority."

L.V.F.

Kellogg Elementary School is the only public school in Chicago with no poor students and thus no state Chapter 1 money. Clissold Elementary has only two, earning it a paltry $1,100. Private fund raising, volunteer recruitment and grantsmanship take up the slack.

"It's a real hardship for us," says Carmen Marcy, principal of Clissold, 2350 W. 110th Pl. "When you ask the board for more money, they just say, 'Use your Chapter 1.' It doesn't compute with the people at Pershing Road that there are some schools that don't get any."

Principal Marcy and Mary Scannell, principal of Kellogg, 9245 S. Leavitt, would like their students to have some of the "extras" that poorer schools are getting through Chapter 1. But they acknowledge that their students' high test scores—among the highest in the city—show that good education isn't necessarily dependent on money.

"It's perfectly clear the amount of money won't make a school successful," Scannell says. "But it's also not fair to discriminate against children who aren't poor, whose parents are middle class but working and struggling. We don't have wealthy children here. We have the average child."

Last year, Kellogg parents went door-to-door and raised $11,000 to rehab the school playground. One parent got his company to donate desks and other furniture it had planned to discard. And PTA and local school council members sold gourmet food items and staged a music recital to raise money for new textbooks, supplies and other "extras."

Kellogg teachers, however, have had no success in getting private grant proposals funded. "Our experience is, if you don't have poor or gifted kids, no one wants to help you," Scannell says.

Clissold
$1,824,672
Kellogg
$847,041

General Education
87%
Other
2%
Maintenance
11%

General Education
86%
Other
5%
Maintenance
9%

Source: CATALYST/budget analysis

CATALYST/NOVEMBER 1991

6
At Clissold, a roster of new programs—all of which rely on volunteers—earned the school a $10,000 Illinois Bell/Ameritech school improvement award last year. To improve attendance, teachers were assigned to truant students to give extra guidance and encouragement. Students with high math skills sign up to help out peers who need coaching. And retired teachers and parents run a tutoring program.

The Illinois Bell/Ameritech award will pay for staff development programs, microscopes for the science lab, a TV and videocassette recorder and new risers for the school chorus. And a $7,000 Joyce Foundation grant paid for an overcrowding study that showed ways the school could make better use of its building space.

Both schools have magnet programs, paid for by the board. At Kellogg, the program teaches students to do electronic database research. To get enough computers, the school had to place ads in neighborhood newspapers; local businesses donated five.

Clissold has the only Montessori program in the Chicago public schools. But the budget for it won't stretch far enough to pay for the extra teacher needed to reduce class sizes to Montessori's suggested standards.

"I've been in inner-city schools, and I wouldn't take it [Chapter 1] away from them," Scannell says. "But our kids deserve extras too." L.V.F.

Lake View High

Schools are not supposed to use state Chapter 1 money to make up for cuts made by the Board of Education. But at least one principal—and probably many more—felt she had no choice.

When the board cut 81 assistant principals to help balance its budget, it left Lake View High School, 4015 N. Ashland, without anyone to plan courses and help students pick the courses they need to meet college entrance requirements and graduate on time.

"We can't do without the service," says Principal Donna Macey, especially since the board also eliminated four old and three new teaching positions at Lake View. "We're going to have to do a lot of rearranging," Macey explains.

Her solution was to take $50,000 from Chapter 1 to hire an instructional coordinator. She took another $15,000 to pay staff overtime to do summer school schedules and other planning; this made up for overtime cuts by the board.

In general, Lake View and other high schools have benefited less from state Chapter 1 than elementary schools have. First, they receive relatively less Chapter 1 money because fewer students sign up for the free-lunch program, a school's ticket to Chapter 1. Second, they have had to use much of their money to pay for a major expenditure the board used to fund—teacher aides. (State officials say that state Chapter 1 has always been the board's funding source for these teacher aides.)

Last year, only 447 of Lake View's approximately 1,300 students signed up for the lunch program. After sending flyers and making phone calls to parents, the school raised the number to 665 this year. The higher count, combined with this year's increase in the per-pupil allocation, produced $396,000 for Lake View, about $90,000 more than Macey expected.

Other high schools are having similar success. Citywide, about 47 percent of high school students qualified for Chapter 1 aid this year, up from 40 percent last year. But the count remains significantly lower than the 80 percent average for elementary schools. High school students have been reluctant to label themselves poor, officials say.

As for aides, Lake View spent almost 40 percent of its Chapter 1 money to pay for seven aides—who monitor hallways and lunchrooms and perform other non-teaching tasks. Under the Chicago Teachers Union contract, high school teachers can have no more than one period of non-teaching duty per day.

Another big chunk of Lake View's Chapter 1 pays for a school disciplinarian to enforce rules, counsel students with discipline problems, resolve conflicts and meet with parents and teachers when problems escalate. "There has to be someone here who can help a student see and talk out what's wrong," says Macey. "These [the disciplinarian and instructional coordinator] should be regular positions, built into the system."

State Chapter 1 did provide Lake View with one major extra this year, a $70,000 computer lab, where students can prepare for college entrance exams and do other enrichment work. The old lab, used mostly by vocational education students, was so busy "people had to book [time] weeks in advance," says Macey. "We felt it was something we really needed." L.V.F.

Lake View $6,157,836

General Education 72%
Other categorical 2%
Other 6%
Federal Chapter 1 2%
Maintenance 12%

Source: CATALYST budget analysis
Foundations rise to reform but commitment unclear

by Stephen K. Clements

Foundation giving to Chicago’s public schools rose dramatically in response to school reform, but the prospects for continued high support are by no means certain as the novelty wears off and new issues arise to beckon funders.

Some foundations, such as the mammoth John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, have made long-term pledges of support; MacArthur’s is $40 million over 10 years. The Fund for Education Reform, a common pot of money for small reform grants to schools, has grown as more foundations have contributed. And a survey conducted earlier this year for the Donors Forum, an association of 137 area foundations, revealed that most funders planned to contribute the same amount or more in 1991 as in 1990.

AN ANALYSIS

But other indications are not so encouraging. Less than half as much money was raised for this fall’s local school council elections as for Round 1 in 1989. The Joyce Foundation, a regional foundation, recently dropped its Educational Ventures Fund—which gave Chicago schools grants of roughly $4,000 to $7,000 for innovative projects—to free up money for educational projects elsewhere in the region. A few other large foundations may soon make similar shifts, a number of foundation officials believe.

Stephen K. Clements is a graduate student at the University of Chicago and a former associate director of the Educational Excellence Network, an education reform information center affiliated with Vanderbilt University. From 1989 to 1991, the network studied Chicago school reform under a grant from The Joyce Foundation.
Some 50 cities around the country have public education funds to provide grants for a wide variety of improvement efforts—from model school programs to teacher training; these funds typically draw on foundation and business resources. A similar multiple-donor funding project in Chicago has long been discussed but now appears stillborn.

At times, foundations eliminate programs for reasons unrelated to their support for the cause—too much staff time required, for example. In general, though, foundations have an attention span of only three to five years and normally decrease high levels of funding for a given cause after that time. If this holds true for school reform, foundations may slacken support before reform's effects on student achievement become known, a period that reform watchers generally say may take five to ten years.

Turnover among foundation staff and board members may also affect long-range foundation plans for school support. No one can say with assurance, therefore, that foundation funding of reform will remain at current levels.

Lowered levels of funding could have harmful effects because so far, much funding—and much of the city's attention—has been focused on getting the new organizational structures in place. The hard part lies ahead, as the school community tries to change what goes on in thousands of classrooms. Changing the behavior of students, teachers, principals and parents is the real challenge of reform.

Finding the best ideas to fund, assessing their results, spreading the word about effective programs and prodding cash-starved schools to implement them will be difficult for foundations as well as for everyone else in the school system. Getting promising new programs into the schools with the most disadvantaged children will be especially difficult. These schools frequently lack the experience to turn ideas into specific proposals and to get grants to make them a reality.

The burden of success or failure will not, of course, lie solely with foundations. Their millions of dollars represent but a fraction of the school system's $2.3 billion budget.

How much to whom?

There is ample evidence that foundation giving for public school improvement has risen with reform, but precise numbers are hard to come by. The Internal Revenue Service requires foundations to report only how much they give to whom, not for what purpose; the amount of information that foundations voluntarily disclose through their annual reports varies widely. Further, there are no standards for classifying grants by purpose.

In recent years, a number of organizations have sought detailed, comparable information through interviews or questionnaires, but attained a response rate of only about 30 percent. The most recent survey, conducted by Iris Krieg for the Donors Forum, found that at least $9.7 million was spent by Chicago-area foundations on Chicago public school improvement in 1990. (That's about half of all education grants and 5 percent of all grants for all purposes.) The public school total jumps to at least $12 million with the addition of school-reform grants from some foundations known not to have responded to the survey. That figure is dramatically higher than the $7.5 million a comparable 1985 survey uncovered.

The 1985 study, conducted for the Donors Forum by the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, also reported that the bulk of the money went to basic skills or student "enrichment" programs—for example, neighborhood centers to teach reading and math, and youth leadership development efforts. Moreover, many of these programs were run by a handful of university-based institutes and non-profit agencies. Only about 11 percent of the funds went to support research and advocacy. Hence, but a small part of the foundation money given in 1985 was aimed at bringing about change in the Chicago public schools.

Reform Act role

While there are no reliable estimates available of foundation giving to Chicago public schools from 1986 through 1989, it is clear that foundations helped set the stage for passage of the Chicago School Reform Act in 1988.

First, their grants helped build the organizational infrastructure necessary for the school reform movement to get rolling. Foundations supported research and advocacy groups like Designs for Change and the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, which were able by the mid-1980s to document many of the problems plaguing the school system. Foundations had also recognized the Saul Alinsky tradition in Chicago by supporting for a number of years community groups like the United Neighborhood Organization and The Woodlawn Organization. The interests of these research/advocacy and activist groups converged after the 1987 teachers strike, and soon the reform movement was barreling along with both ideas and neighborhood muscle.

Several foundations also helped bring about two conferences, one in 1987 and the other in 1988, at which reform strategies being tried in other parts of the country were discussed. (The business group Chicago United also sponsored a similar important conference in 1987.) The idea behind these conferences was not to dictate a reform approach for Chicago, but to see what was working—and not working—elsewhere.

In addition, a few figures—like John Corbally, then head of the MacArthur Foundation, and Anne Hallett of the Wieboldt Foundation—participated directly in reform move-
ment activities. Corbally was co-chair of Mayor Harold Washington's Education Summit in 1987-88, and Hallett urged reformers to adopt a site-based management model similar to the one eventually embodied in the reform act. (Following passage of the act, she also helped found the Citywide Coalition for School Reform.)

Still, these foundation activities were but a small part of the larger reform movement. Once the reform train started to steam along in 1987, it's likely that reform would have happened with or without coordinated foundation support.

Reform Act follow-up

After the reform act became law, foundation involvement increased significantly and in an unprecedented way. A large number of foundation program officers and representatives began participating in meetings held by advocacy and activist groups to talk about implementing reform. Some got involved to learn about reform so they could be more responsive to the needs of the school community. But many more engaged themselves because it represented a rare opportunity for them to be involved firsthand in shaping policy.

Many foundation staffers were emboldened, too, by the work of the Education Group of the Donors Forum. This was an assemblage of education program officers from several dozen foundations who began meeting frequently in late 1986 to discuss ways to improve education in the city.

Their meetings not only enabled staffers to bone up on education theory and practice—particularly in the area of systemic change and restructuring—but also to learn how and to whom other foundations were giving money. One result was that the sometimes disparate foundations began moving in roughly the same direction. In fact, conversations with foundation officials outside Chicago suggest that the level of collaboration among foundations and grant recipients here was greater than in any recent policy-making endeavor elsewhere in the country.

Another result was that the foundations were willing and

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**How to get money, services for your school**

by Susan Klonsky

In a city the size of Chicago—with a dozen major universities, hundreds of foundations and thousands of business and financial institutions—schools have barely scratched the surface of outside help. But obtaining such help takes school initiative and planning. Here are some pointers:

- **THINK DEVELOPMENT.** Candy and bake sales are fine for immediate needs—repairing and replacing broken equipment, for example—but long-term educational change requires long-term fund raising. LSCs should gather members of the school staff and community, including local businesses, into a development group. Some schools, including Norwood Park Elementary, 5900 N. Nina, and Alcott Elementary, 2625 N. Orchard, have set up not-for-profit organizations to work on community relations and fund raising.

- **THINK VISION.** Presenting a clear picture of how you want your school or class to change is the key to winning foundation grants, which range from small sums for individual teachers to multi-year funding for schoolwide planning and restructuring. (Don't expect any money for building repairs, ordinary supplies and maintenance or other routine expenses that public dollars should support.)

Some schools write themselves off, reasoning that their test scores are too low or too high for foundations to be interested. But decisions about funding are made largely upon the extent to which a school has a common well-articulated vision for change.

- **THINK NETWORKING.** Schools can enhance their chances of obtaining grants by linking up with other schools or community groups to craft joint projects.

- **DEVELOP SPECIALISTS.** Select one or two members of the school community or staff to receive training in proposal writing. One way to spot such talent is to request teachers to write proposals describing their ideal classroom improvement projects and then submit the best ones to a foundation that makes teacher grants.

The Board of Education used to provide free training on proposal-writing through the Department of Grants and Technical Assistance. But the board recently closed the program to help balance its budget. The Donors Forum, an association of foundations, offers two-day courses on proposal writing. The next one will be held Nov. 13-14. The fee is $150 per person. For reservations, call the Donors Forum Library (312) 431-0265.

- **VISIT DONORS FORUM LIBRARY.** Located at 53 W. Jackson, Chicago's library of philanthropy is open free to the public. It
able to respond quickly to the reform act. And the menu of reform-related initiatives they funded is extensive, including advocacy, classroom projects, school-improvement projects, publications (including CATALYST), reform research and monitoring, reform conferences and get-out-the-vote drives. Little, if any, money went to principal training and support.

Independent and corporate foundations took different paths, William S. McKersie, a former program officer for The Joyce Foundation, reports in an unpublished paper. "Independent foundations emphasized improving the [reform] act's weaknesses," McKersie writes. "More and more, they emphasized teacher training and educational innovation. Corporate foundations tended to place more emphasis on immediate implementation of the act, and gave greater support to the acquisition of materials and the coordination of services."

Because foundations increased total education funding to accommodate reform initiatives, they were able to continue funding many pre-reform educational programs, such as the basic skills and enrichment programs, McKersie says.

Foundation funds are used interactively with other private-sector investments. The money for this fall's local school council elections, for example, was distributed to community organizations that had arranged partnerships with other nonprofit agencies and businesses to collaborate in promoting citizen involvement in schools.

Has all this reform-related foundation money been well spent? It is a difficult question to answer. In the first place, not enough time has passed for the effects of some programs to be visible. For example, foundations have provided substantial funding for the Consortium on Chicago School Research, which in the coming years will provide crucial survey data and other information about school reform. Second, foundations themselves have little ability to assess the efficacy of their own efforts. Foundation staffers can list the number of schools and estimate the number of individuals who have been touched by their grants or can point to instructional materials produced by programs they supported, but the

Continued on page 48

offers information about foundations, the programs they support and proposal deadlines. A helpful staff points visitors to useful reference guides.

■ CONSULT YOUR SCHOOL LIBRARY. The sixth volume of the Leadership Learning Library, a set of videotapes and guides published and sent to all schools last spring by Leadership for Quality Education and the Citywide Coalition for School Reform, walks LSCs through the grant-seeking process. It is called "Hidden Community Resources." For more information, call LQE at (312) 592-6532.

■ TAP INTO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY. Several business groups aim to draw schools and businesses closer together. They offer direct assistance, typically "consulting" from volunteers, and referrals. Such groups include Leadership for Quality Education (312) 592-6532, the Executive Service Corps (312) 580-1840 and Volunteer Network (312) 606-8240.

The Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry offers business connections and pre-employment programs for elementary and high schools, but it reports that fewer than a fourth of Chicago schools have made use of its services. For more information, call (312) 580-6945.

■ GET ADOPTED. More than 10 years after the "Adopt-A-School" program was launched in Chicago, a third of the schools remain "orphans."

It's time for schools to seek out businesses and other organizations and pull them into new partnerships. Here's how: Contact the president or community relations manager, preferably by letter, to request help with financial aid, goods and in-kind assistance. Arrange for a meeting. Invite business officials to visit your school: for an assembly, holiday event or open house, or to speak to students on career day.

Examples of such initiative include McDowell Elementary, 1419 E. 89th, which invited the 87th Street Business Association to an annual weekend retreat, and Garvey Elementary, 5225 N. Oak Park, which has joined the local Chamber of Commerce.

■ TAP INTO THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY. Since reform began, the largest reform-related foundation grants have gone to university education departments. By agreeing to become part of a research project or be a site for student teachers, schools may receive financial assistance, computer link-ups, consultation and staff development. Write the dean, noting staff members who are alumni of the college. Capitalize on contacts with individual professors.

■ BAND TOGETHER FOR POLITICAL ACTION. While pursuing private money, don't ignore the need to work with other schools and organizations to protect public funding gains, such as state Chapter 1, and to demand fiscal accountability from the general superintendent, the Board of Education and the Illinois Legislature.

Susan Klonsky is a parent member of the Sayre Language Academy Local School Council and editor of Reform Watch, a school reform newsletter published by the Donors Forum.
In the October 1991 issue, CATALYST published results of a survey of 13,000 Chicago elementary school teachers conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research. "Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn" describes what teachers think about school reform, their school communities (including parents and pupils) and instructional change.

To promote further consideration and dialogue about the issues raised by the report, CATALYST invited five individuals from different school constituencies to comment. Specifically, we asked them what findings they considered most important and what action those findings suggest. We encourage readers to respond and join in the written discussion.

JACQUELINE B. VAUGHN
President
Chicago Teachers Union

The Chicago Teachers Union expresses its gratitude to the Consortium on Chicago School Research for acknowledging the role of the classroom teacher in reform and for asking what we think. The study quantifies many CTU claims: that teachers are enthusiastic about their work and improving it through reform, want input into curriculum decisions and have confidence in their own abilities.

Teachers' high confidence ratings—almost 95 percent said they feel competent teaching reading and math—received the unfortunate media interpretation that teachers think they already know everything. (Not wholly untrue; the majority of Chicago teachers have honed their skills with more than 15 years of experience teaching urban children, sometimes under the hardest conditions, with minimal resources and certainly without the parental and community support they now enjoy.) With its finding that 87 percent of teachers have gone back for additional training, we believe the study counters the criticism that Chicago teachers are underqualified. We invite principals to assume their roles as instructional leaders and provide administrative support to sustain teacher enthusiasm. Given teachers' willingness to return to school, they would surely welcome meaningful staff development. In schools where principals do not have confidence in their staffs, shared decision making cannot work.

We remember that when school reform legislation was being drafted, many so-called reformers protested the CTU's insistence on a professional curriculum committee. Despite teachers' importance to the instructional process, many reformers wanted teachers eliminated from the shared decision-making process.

Two-thirds of Chicago's teachers are positive about the professional personnel advisory committee (PPAC) and feel it represents their voice. Changes in the classroom will grow out of PPACs in schools where teachers have the opportunity to effect change. An advisory council like the PPAC highlights the importance of a union contact for teachers. Without it, teachers at many schools would not have the job security to suggest meaningful changes in classroom practices. The CTU has worked to prevent several instances of teacher LSC members being harassed for taking positions against their principals.

While critics also point to slow movement on instructional change, they lose sight of the fact that insufficient revenue has been made available to implement reform initiatives. Many teachers have suggested meaningful instructional change. But without the resources to put these new programs into place, their suggestions will remain on paper and will not show up in the consortium's next survey. We hope parents will join us in
Selected teacher survey results

Since reform, I am more optimistic this school will improve.

26% STRONGLY AGREE 37% AGREE 22% DISAGREE 15% STRONGLY DISAGREE

I receive support from parents for the work I do.

18% STRONGLY AGREE 33% AGREE 29% DISAGREE 20% STRONGLY DISAGREE

Changes since reform have no effect on my classroom practice.

28% STRONGLY AGREE 29% AGREE 26% DISAGREE 17% STRONGLY DISAGREE

I favor an extended school year for teachers and students.

17% STRONGLY AGREE 13% AGREE 15% DISAGREE 55% STRONGLY DISAGREE

our goal of implementing reform and seeking a permanent source of adequate funding for public education.

JERRY B. OLSON
Director, Chicago Teachers' Center
Northeastern Illinois University

The survey of Chicago Public School teachers sponsored by the Consortium on Chicago School Research clearly demonstrates that a majority of teachers are involved and favorably disposed to school reform. This is not surprising in that most of the reform efforts to date have been focused on governance issues. What does concern us as educators is the initial lack of connection between school reform and improvement in classroom practice.

The survey reveals that most of the teachers believe that reform efforts have had little influence on their everyday instructional practices. Although over 60 percent of the teachers have been involved in some professional development activities in the past year, it appears that many of these efforts have not had the intended effect of changing teacher instruction. One reason for this lack of connection between reform and classroom practice may be that workshops and courses are not frequently related to specific school improvement plans. They are developed independent of the unique problems faced at individual schools.

At the same time, the survey does indicate that there are many teachers making reform work in the schools; and as teacher involvement in decision making increases, there is every likelihood that with appropriate professional development programs, teachers can make significant strides in reforming their classroom practices as well as their school governance procedures.

The report's findings make a strong case that more attention be given by local school councils and professional personnel advisory committees to how professional development programs can be effectively designed to support school reform. Our work at the Chicago Teachers' Center over the last 13 years has taught us that if professional development is to be effective, it must be geared to the individual contexts of schools and provide practical ways in which teachers can effectively engage students in the learning process. In the spirit of school reform, it is vital that teachers be consulted and take an active role in defining how professional development activities can work for them to motivate children to learn.

Moreover, the fact that teachers are concerned about how the home and community impact on the school indicates the professional development programs need to help teachers value and build upon the diverse cultural and socioeconomic experiences that students bring to the classroom.

The survey also shows that teachers are concerned about how student misbehavior intrudes upon instruction. It is possible that many of the current professional development programs do not adequately address this issue. The Chicago Teachers' Center has found that if workshops or classes are to be translated into classroom change, teachers need ongoing support for any improvements they wish to make so they can explore with workshop leaders and colleagues how they can deal with the practical problems of implementing change.

Finally, if professional development is to bring about some major structural changes in education, such programs must address more than the acquisition of new techniques; they must also provide opportunities for teachers to reflect upon and examine the underlying values and beliefs implicit in their teaching.

ADRIENNE Y. BAILEY
Deputy Superintendent,
Office of Instructional Services
Chicago Board of Education

I found these points most important and interesting: Nearly 60 percent of the teachers agreed that they have influence on the decisions that affect them, just over half (52 percent) have a great deal or some influence in determining the content of staff development and only 44 percent have a great deal or some influence in establishing the school curriculum.

Although the numbers may appear, at first glance, to be less than desired, they indicate that local school governance
has indeed made strides toward putting the education of children in the hands of those who best know the needs of the children.

In support of school reform, the Office of Instructional Services is being reorganized to provide teachers with the services they need to make sound decisions, become staff development leaders and develop local school curriculum. The primary intent of the reorganization is to shift the culture, operations and focus of the office to an assistance mission in support of local schools.

The office will keep abreast of current trends, demonstration projects and developments related to key curriculum and instruction issues as well as facilitate the development of policies that promote school-level governance and educational improvement.

The spirit with which the office will function will reflect a new cooperative relationship with local schools that is characterized by mutual respect. In addition, the office will network, broker and form partnerships with external organizations, businesses and universities to provide for school-specific needs as identified in local school improvement plans and as requested by local school staff.

Our energies and efforts to support the reform of teaching and learning must move to center stage alongside governance. Moving forward will be a tall task, given the financial condition of our district. Nevertheless, our new vision for restructuring curriculum and instruction is very much a part of the reform expectation.

Our challenge is to move reform closer to the classroom and toward a teacher’s agenda. It is my hope that the services provided by staff in the Office of Instructional Services will result in a greatly increased number of teachers who realize that they are meaningfully involved in improving the education of their students.

LEONARD J. DOMINGUEZ
Deputy Mayor for Education
City of Chicago

Considering that we are barely two years into reform, the results of the teacher survey are extremely encouraging. I refer primarily to the questions regarding school reform in general, local school councils, professional personnel advisory committees, school and mission and leadership, adequacy of facilities, resources, etc. and issues of collegiality, teacher influence and teacher voice.

The generally positive attitude bodes well for the progress that I feel must be made in the areas where lukewarm or negative feelings emerged. Now that local school governance is somewhat institutionalized, it is time that the energies and resources of all partners in this marvelous new social contract be focused on what happens among students, teachers and parents.

Teachers were about evenly divided as to whether positive instructional practices had emerged since reform. And only a small majority think that staff development is more responsive to their instructional needs. Yet, teachers overwhelmingly opposed lengthening the school day or the school year. I don’t know of anyone who is attempting to improve instruction who is not concerned about the lack of quality time to involve teachers in the process.

All parties—the Board of Education, local school councils, reform groups and the Chicago Teachers Union—must address the crucial task of rethinking and reorganizing staff development. Otherwise, the reform movement will never reach its most important goal, improving instruction and achievement.

Another area that bears investigation is school-community relations and parent involvement. Given the strong belief that parents can and should play an important role in the improvement process, the feeling of almost 80 percent of teachers that parents and community make little effort to support them is troubling indeed. It points to a need for finding better ways to communicate with and involve parents in positive projects with teachers.

Perhaps the teachers union could take the lead here, for, it seems to me, the best persons to provide ideas and instruction in this area are the many, many teachers who are very successful in involving parents in their instructional programs. I would think they are the “experts” who should be consulted.

LYNN CHERKASKY-DAVIS
Kindergarten teacher, Dumas Child-Parent Center Finalist, Illinois Teacher of the Year

What I wish to comment on is the finding, tacked on to the end of the report, that more than 40 percent of teachers spent more than 12 hours preparing their pupils for standardized tests. I found it distressing that in this day of enlightened research, developmentally appropriate practices and holistic teaching, 40 percent of elementary school teachers are still teaching to the test.

If reform is to come from within the classroom, it is imperative that our philosophies and practices be learner driven, not test driven. When assessment is used to inform us, then it has value; when it is used to grade children as we grade eggs and meat, then it needs to change. Standardized testing does not inform us about how to meet the needs of individual students.

I strongly believe in on-going evaluation—“value” being the root word—of our students and our own professional growth. Standardized testing alone cannot do that. We also need alternative means of assessment to better address the
accountability issue—for child, teacher, family and community, all of whom must share responsibility for children’s learning. These alternatives include portfolios, self-evaluation, descriptive reviews, anecdotal records, audio and video assessment, checklists, running reading records, holistic evaluation of writing samples and holistic surveys.

Outcome measures such as standardized tests dominate and distort public discourse on education and have little validity in measurement of teacher performance as well. By relying on them, our current accountability framework has had the unfortunate consequence of increasingly narrowing what is taught to what is measured—and, I might add, in developmentally inappropriate ways.

As shareholders in our reform initiative, we teachers must use our voice not only to assure that we are evaluating our children appropriately, but also that we ourselves are judged appropriately. Teachers should be held accountable for children’s learning progress, not for test outcomes.

We as professionals can take responsibility for designing assessment procedures and tools that will give us the information we need to meet our students’ needs, desires and learning styles. Maybe then we can stop insulting ourselves by wasting 155,464 hours of our and our students’ valuable learning time and $4.2 million (the cost of that time) in preparing for tests that serve little useful purpose to us as practitioners or students as learners.

So far, reform not so good

by Wilbur B. Brookover

As a reader of CATALYST and member of its editorial board, I have had the privilege of observing, at a distance, developments in Chicago school reform over the past year and a half. And, frankly, I have been quite doubtful it will achieve its goals. School reform leaders seem so preoccupied with issues of control and the mechanics of local school organization that they seem to have lost sight of the fundamental purpose of reform—improvement in student learning.

However, we now have newly elected councils. As they take up their duties, they need to make a collective commitment to the goals set forth by the Chicago School Reform Act. If councils are serious about reaching those goals, they must come to see that merely adding more programs for different groups and individuals, buying more books and reducing class size will not get them there.

Remarkably, the School Reform Act is based to a large extent on the best available knowledge concerning educational change and improvement. First, the act recognizes that the necessary changes must occur at the local school level, and it frees schools to make those changes. While central administration and community support are helpful and desirable, the process of school teaching and learning occurs at the school.

Equally important, the act makes clear that reform is aimed at increasing student achievement. As such, its success will be judged by the extent to which students learn more. Specifically, schools are charged with designing school improvement plans to ensure that students are to “the maximum extent possible provided with a common learning experience that is of high academic quality and that reflects high expectations for all students’ capacities to learn” and “that students achieve proficiency in reading, writing, mathematics, science and critical thinking skills so that the district averages equal or surpass the national norms.”

These goals require very significant changes in both our long-held theories about student learning and the structure of our instructional programs.

Early in this century, we developed a theory that human beings differ greatly in ability to learn and that these differences were distributed in a bell-shaped curve; that is, some students are able to learn much and fast, and others are able to learn only a limited amount and more slowly.

Concurrently, we developed the concept of intelligence and accompanying intelligence testing based upon the bell-
shaped curve. Those who construct such tests need to find items that discriminate among test takers and result in a bell-shaped distribution of scores. They are not designed to measure what each student has learned. In the early years, such tests tended to identify Eastern and Southern European immigrant children, as well as rural Southern children, as inferior in ability. More recently, the poor and minority children concentrated in urban centers are more likely to be identified as low in ability.

**Children learn as expected**

Assuming the validity of this theory of learning ability, American educators designed instructional programs to fulfill the belief. So we now have a wide range of different educational programs, for gifted, superior, average, slow and retarded learners. This differentiated instruction is perhaps best illustrated by the different mathematics programs in the junior high school and early high school years. Typically, except in middle- and upper-middle-class suburban schools, less than half of the students are enrolled in a regular algebra program. This gatekeeper course results in even fewer students being taught chemistry, physics or any advanced mathematics.

The theory of highly differentiated abilities to learn has long since been discredited. More than 50 years ago, Floyd Allport (1934) demonstrated that learned behavior is not distributed in a bell-shaped curve, and Benjamin Bloom (1976) taught us that essentially any person can learn anything if provided the appropriate conditions for learning.

This is probably best illustrated by the examination of the learning of language in any society. Almost 100 percent of all the people of the world learn to speak whatever language is provided by their immediate range of associates. It is only when they get to school that we identify those students who “cannot” learn the language of mathematics, the language of literature or a foreign language.

Some schools have demonstrated that we can teach all students to higher levels of achievement. Extensive research has demonstrated that we teach and students learn what we expect them to learn. Those whom we do not expect to learn and whom we do not teach develop feelings of futility and hopelessness in the school environment. If we want students to learn well, we must believe they can learn, that we can teach them and expect them to learn. Although this conviction is essential, it alone does not teach students.

In order to implement the beliefs and expectations that all children should learn and can learn, it is necessary to restructure our local school programs and redefine our local educational policies. It will be necessary for each school to discard the sorting and labeling of students and placing them in different levels with different goals and different expectations. Students must be distributed only in flexible groups designed to ensure that all master the objectives of a high-quality program.

Research demonstrates that flexible, cooperative learning teams that compete as teams are more effective in achieving educational outcomes than are traditional patterns of individually differentiated instruction. The current practice of setting different expectations for students with presumably different abilities and providing varying levels of instruction for each results in lower achievement for large proportions of students.

We must restructure and reorganize our schools to reward the staffs for high achievement and discard those policies that reward the staff and schools for not teaching some groups of students. Teachers are praised for their professional skill in identifying “at-risk” students who are then sent to a special teacher or special school for less-demanding instruction. Many teachers are thus rewarded with smaller classes they consider easier to teach. We must reduce drastically such premiums for identifying large numbers of students as handicapped and restrict this to only the truly handicapped students. Teachers must be retrained to teach all students to a high mastery level and not simply select a few who are to be taught to such levels.

**Colleges teach sorting**

For several decades, the primary emphasis in teacher education and administration preparation has been on the individual differences in students. We have trained our educators to identify and classify our students in categories of gifted and talented, average, slow learning and retarded. This classification is highly correlated with the socioeconomic status, race and other family characteristics of students. In fact, evidence indicates that family backgrounds frequently override other factors in the classification of students. The identification of “at-risk” students is essentially a social-class identification, which results in lower expectations and assignment to programs that are not designed to teach very much.

I wonder what would happen if parents and other family members in a society accepted the educators’ theory that they could teach only certain children to talk their language. Would the sorting of the talkers from the non-talkers—and the teaching that accommodates this classification—result in the universal learning of a language that exists today? No. The universal learning of language results from the universal assumption and expectation that all will learn it. Similarly, the school curriculum must set common objectives to be mastered by all students and must create instructional programs designed to teach those objectives.

These changes are fundamental and require major
reorientation of each school. It is not an impossible task. Some schools have done it, and the Chicago School Reform Act provides the mechanisms by which every school can accomplish this reform. The particular steps may vary from school to school, but the local school council and professional personnel advisory committee, in cooperation with the principal, can make the commitment to change their program so that the mastery of the goals identified is accomplished. Each must guard against getting sidetracked in the reorganization process.

If I were a local school council member, I would insist that we make clear to both the staff and the public in every possible way that our goal is to have every student master reading, writing, mathematics, science and critical thinking. I would insist on evaluating the principal and staff on the extent to which the school achieves this goal. To achieve this goal, I would remind the staff that they must provide all students "with a common learning experience that is of high academic quality and that reflects high expectations for all students." These are the essentials of Chicago school reform and the duty of each council member.

Contrary to our moral commitment to the American creed of equal access and equal opportunity for all, we developed theories of ability to learn and programs of education that deny access and discriminate against the poor and disadvantaged. America's greatness in the world is threatened by this failure to adequately educate larger proportions of our youth. Chicago school reform provides each local school the challenge and opportunity to correct this educational failure.

References

Budget slams schools

by Bernie Noven

A former school superintendent once confided that the Board of Education was about jobs and contracts, not education. This statement defines the present struggle between the board and school reform groups over the school system's $2.3 billion budget.

Anticipating the board would adopt a budget that spared administrators and devastated schools, the budget task force of the Citywide Coalition for School Reform started work last May to develop an alternative that would do only minor damage to schools. Our alternative budget proposes certain cuts from the central and district offices to save $40 million and shift another $6 million to the schools. Our cuts are more than three times what the administration claims it cut out of the bureaucracy.

In spite of support for our proposal from Mayor Daley and the Chicago Tribune, the board ignored our budget, voting instead for a document that, among other things, cut supplies to the schools by 90 percent, destroyed a state-funded reading program and closed 13 schools.

The following are examples of task force proposals. (Numbers for the central and district offices were calculated before the board released its budget July 15; therefore, actual savings might be slightly different.)

■ CLOSE SUBDISTRICT OFFICES. Savings: $5 million. Closing the 11 subdistrict offices would have shaved $5 million from the board's deficit and left $350,000 for the schools in every subdistrict to use for joint projects, such as curriculum development or staff training. (This plan contemplates regrouping high schools with their elementary schools, thus creating 10 instead of 11 subdistrict clusters.) The board chose to protect subdistrict offices and to close 13 schools instead, saving only $2 million.

■ CUT TRADES WORKERS. Savings: $6.2 million. Highly paid, unionized trades workers are a hindrance rather than a benefit to local schools. For example, glaziers cost us $1.7 million...
per year, yet schools often wait five years or more to have a window pane replaced. If we were not tied to a contract with the glaziers' union, the school custodian would be free to repair windows. Central office contends that contracts prevent such cuts, but our lawyer found lay-off and contingency clauses that make our recommendations possible. (We did not recommend cutting carpenters and electricians but did urge productivity studies for both trades.)

The task force plan would leave $3.4 million that schools could use to hire outsiders for painting, plastering and other minor maintenance.

- **TRIM THE PERSONNEL OFFICE.** Savings: $2.7 million. With the state ticking on the certification of teachers, and principals able to select staff directly, the board's personnel responsibilities have declined in recent years. Nevertheless, there are 11 more personnel workers now than in 1980, when the school system had 2,000 more teachers. The only function the personnel department should perform is checking credentials, which is essentially a clerical task. The task force recommends a cutback in staff and salaries.

- **RESTRUCTURE INSTRUCTION OFFICES.** Savings: $5.5 million. The task force calls for an overhaul of the curriculum, vocational and other instruction departments so that they serve rather than dictate to local schools. By eliminating both jobs and non-personnel funds budgeted to these units, $5.5 million could be saved and $2.7 million made available to the schools for their own curriculum and staff development, equipment and textbooks.

- **RESTRUCTURE CUSTODIAL SERVICES.** Savings: $20 million. Chicago schools should adopt the school maintenance system used in surrounding school districts by downgrading the chief engineer at each school to head custodian and eliminating the fireman. These positions were created when the schools had complex boilers and machines. Further, only the head custodian and a helper should work during the school day; the majority of custodians should work after regular school hours, when it is easier to clean classrooms.

- **ADOPT VACANCY ALLOWANCE.** Savings: $23.5 million. The School Board writes a budget on the assumption that every job will be filled for the entire school year, which never happens. For example, people retire and are not immediately replaced. As a result, the board winds up with unspent dollars, or "salvage," that either are spent without outside scrutiny or create overly high year-end balances. Neither is considered good budgetary practice.

In contrast, the City of Chicago and the Chicago Park District have looked at their histories of temporary job vacancies and reduced their salary and benefits appropriations accordingly.

We suggest that the School Board start with a conservative vacancy allowance, 2 percent, and raise it as experience warrants. Some of the savings this year should go to restore money cut from substitute teachers.

- **RENegotiate raises.** Savings: $41 million. To encourage the best classroom teachers to remain in the classroom, we propose that the negotiated across-the-board raises of 7 percent be scrapped in favor of these differentiated raises: Classroom teachers, 5 percent; other school staff, 2 percent; staff not working in schools, a freeze. Further, teachers who return to the classroom should get 5 percent raises. This plan would cost only $37 million, less than half the $78 million needed for the 7-percent raises, which include $5.8 million for administrators.

- **ELIMINATE ADMINISTRATIVE EXCESS.** Savings: Unknown. Through raises and promotions, the board increased the salaries of well over 100 administrators, in some cases by as much as 28 percent. Further, $500,000 in educational funds are used to subsidize the cafeteria at the board's Pershing Road headquarters. Administrators receive $500,000 a year for "car reimbursement." To be eligible, an administrator need leave the building only five times a month—whether or not he or she owns a car.

In order to provide an adequate education for our kids, we need additional revenues from all levels of government. Unfortunately, lobbying for additional funds becomes futile because of the lack of credibility at the central office. Legislators continue to use the board's misuse of funds at the central office as a rationale for denying increased funding.

The 1991-92 budget adopted by the board gives credence to this argument. It leaves the credibility of the present administration in question. This budget clearly puts the well-being of administrators above the well-being of children. The central office cannot have it both ways. It cannot garner more government funds while misusing the funds it presently has. □
Lane LSC chair’s commentary reads like Saddam Hussein press release

After reading the sorry remarks of our perpetually disgruntled local school council chairman in the October issue of CATALYST, I was tempted to say nothing and rely on the public to be aware of his past record of discrediting. Alas, perhaps there are a few out there not aware of that.

Reading the article was much like reading a Saddam Hussein press release. What self-serving paranoid hysterical. Where shall I start? The outright falsehood? The deliberate distortion? The apparent inability to perceive reality without delusions of martyrdom and persecution?

Own worst enemy

Mr. Fahy is his own worst enemy. When we began this new venture of local school reform we all looked to each other for mutual assistance and guidance. Our council unanimously elected Mr. Fahy our chairman.

That was our first mistake. He promptly began to abuse and alienate each of the council members, treating us as though we had no right to speak and be heard, while attempting to run the council as a dictatorship of one. None of us ever agreed to surrender his or her vote to Mr. Fahy. When we attempted to use it or demand due process we were subjected to tantrums and whining of monumental proportions. He often refused to take votes on appeals of his rulings as is required by our bylaws as well as by Robert’s Rules of Order, under which we operate.

In his article, Mr. Fahy mentions several individuals who were fired. Not one of those people was “fired.” The teacher mentioned resigned her department chairpersonship and later resigned from the school system. That was her prerogative. Some LSC subcommittee chairpersons who were autocratically put in place without the advice and consent of the entire LSC membership were not allowed to stay. That was our prerogative. They had no right to act as a committee of the entire LSC and issue reports seeking their own private agenda.

Mr. Fahy has no real grasp of what a technical education is all about. He never really made an effort to find out. If he had talked to any of our technical education teachers or had ever visited one of their shops, he might have begun to understand the purpose of and see the high-quality technical programs we have at Lane. His condescending, deprecating comments about “shop training” illustrate an arrogant and foolish bias based on monumental ignorance.

How about a non-revisionist history lesson, Mr. Chairman? It was in 1958 as a response to Sputnik that Lane changed its admission policies and its curriculum to emphasize science and mathematics. We must have done something right, Mr. Chairman. Our students are accepted at competitive colleges all over the United States, including the University of Illinois, MIT, Princeton, the University of Chicago, Northwestern, Yale, Loyola, Harvard and De Paul. One of our illustrious graduates, General Donald Kutyna, USAF, was in charge of the United States space program.

In spite of Mr. Fahy’s everlasting obstructionism, the LSC has accomplished much in the last two years, including the development of the school improvement plan, an improved safety and security network with sister public schools, an outreach program involving parents and students in local decision making and many other innovative undertakings.

We all have much to learn in this life from each other. The very first thing we ought to learn is to listen to each other and to treat each other fairly, respectfully and with honesty. It’s time Mr. Fahy learned that. When he does, we will work together for a better future for our fine students at Lane Technical High School. With or without Mr. Fahy, that will be our council’s guiding principle.

Pat O’Malley, teacher member
Lane Technical High School Local School Council

Science issue well done, missed major resource

The series of stories on science education in the September 1991 issue of CATALYST was well done and informative. However, none of the articles mentioned an organization that has worked hard over the last 20 years to provide hands-on science education for school children: The University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service.

Healy School, which you mentioned as a science education leader in the public schools, participates in the Extension’s Indoor Gardening Program and the Incubation and Embryology Project, which are two of many science enrichment projects offered through the Extension’s youth program, 4-H.

Every year, Extension specialists train Chicago teachers in presenting the Incubation and Embryology Project and other projects in the natural and mechanical sciences.

They also are instrumental in bringing the Farm Bureau’s Ag in the Classroom program to Chicago school children, many of whom have no concept of where food comes from.

In Chicago, people still do not understand that Cooperative Extension and 4-H have gone beyond farming and teaching children to raise farm animals. We have a wide variety of programs to help young people develop their skills and interests.

Karen Smith Green, Extension Advisor
Cooperative Extension Service/Cook County
Reform has brought extra tasks and long hours to all involved. CATALYST's diarists have added to those tasks and hours the responsibility of writing about reform: their experiences and observations.

This month, we welcome back Marcia, a mother who began with us as a diarist in our first issue but had to take some time off for other reform duties. Her commitment returned her "home."

No diarist has been more committed than Amelia. Her first submission, covering a three-month period, was a hundred typed pages. She has continued to write these two years—perceptively and critically, reflecting her frustrations and joys. Alas, this month you will read her final entries because she has moved to another part of the country. But speak of dedication: As she and her family motored to their new home, Amelia finished her diaries, writing in longhand.

CATALYST salutes the commitment of all our diarists (who write under pen names) and thank them for their contributions.

May 13 We're gonna make it! This year has been rough but rewarding. School reform has been effective. It has made progress and has opened doors for better programs and for more involvement at my school.

Student involvement has increased by a large percentage. Recently, for example, students took a stand to make a difference for themselves. For two years, they fought for a change in the class code, a change that would allow male students to wear short pants that extend to the knees. Students feel too uncomfortable in a non-air-conditioned building on hot spring and summer days.

Five hundred students, both male and female, signed a petition requesting the amendment. More than a dozen young men were present at an LSC meeting; in a loud and respectful protest, they all wore standard-length slacks. I sum it all up, after a very controversial and seemingly endless debate, the council ruled in favor of the students' proposal concluding that "comfort is important to the learning atmosphere."

This is simply one small example of greater student participation in school affairs, encouraged by the whole reform process.

Parents have also taken more interest in their student. We've actually had parents coming to school because they feel the quality of education could be better. And voluntarism is becoming a more "in" thing.

I wonder if this reform spirit is contagious. I think it is.

ELIZABETH, teacher

June 1 We are constantly being bombarded in the media with doom and gloom about the Chicago public schools. If buildings are in ruins, the board is operating seriously in trouble with red with prospects of having to reopen contract negotiations with the Chicago Teachers Union, we are facing our first election in the fall without the support of the state legislature.

However, despite the doom and gloom, and despite the fact that I, along with thousands of others, am billed as a future of a teacher and an overpaid failure at that, I'm heartened by the media. The Chicago Sun-Times recently did two stories that put things in perspective.

Eighteen Students Win Science Prizes. These young people were all from CPS; some even attend inner-city high schools on Supt. Kimbrough's hit list. Are some teachers somewhere doing something right? Yes!

The drawings, paintings, pottery and prose of several high school students were also applauded in a newspaper pulpit.

More good news.

Good news

CARLOS, teacher

March 8 Past problems with a certain group of parents have disappeared. The principal began to hold informal meetings open to all parents and community members to discuss whatever was on their minds.

April 8 This local school council has come a long way. It has matured. It still argues loudly—but with respect. Two members have always been very antagonistic. They never come to the school. They never participate in any school-related activities. They come to the monthly council meetings and continue to complain and criticize. Now, other council members who used to be the same are the ones who require order, organization, preparation and civility. As a result, we are getting more accomplished.
ROBIN, observer

June 25 Graduation at School B was held outdoors in the playground on a blessedly lovely June evening. The graduates, reputed to be a tough bunch, looked angelic in their blue and white gowns; and there were lots of awards for attendance, sports, academic success and citizenship, all punctuated by shouts and whistles from family and friends in the capacity crowd (limited only by the number of chairs available). After the ceremony, what should appear but a mariachi group! It played while the crowd had punch and cookies. As I left, the chain-link fence around the playground was lined with neighborhood spectators. The musicians and the ceremony had been a cheering announcement to the community that this school is a place where good things happen.

RAYMOND, community

June 30 Chapter 1 money is the most important tool LSCs have to affect the classrooms of our local schools. We have used our Chapter 1 discretionary funds to reduce class size (hiring five teachers and two aides), to extend the school day (with after-school programs) and to enhance our regular curriculum programs (through computerization of reading, math and social science; the purchase of more science materials; and investment in advanced math instruction for upper-level elementary students).

Problems

LAZARUS, teacher

April 12 Two teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience are being cut from the staff because of loss of enrollment in their subject areas. Again, we are into basic safety and security needs. The personnel department of the Board of Education is not helpful in supplying information on assignment dates upon which seniority hinges. And, unfortunately, some union field representatives have not handled the problem with the tact and patience required to deal with people for whom advice and out-placement counseling should be provided.

April 28 In our previous North Central evaluation, the visiting team pointed out that the textbooks for our department did not match the levels of the courses being taught. Apparently, no one checked to see what teacher-made materials were being used to make up the difference. Nor did anyone calculate how much money it would cost to obtain the appropriate textbooks.

May 1 Teacher Appreciation Week came and went unnoticed at our school. It is a strange coincidence that this should be the time for the board to present its good news. For yet another year we must steel ourselves against cuts that will come. Like other industries, we are into the age of concession bargaining.

At best our students have shown only a desultory interest in learning this year. How can they be optimistic about their futures when it is clear that no one who could make a difference really cares about them.

CARLOS, teacher

May 31 I led a workshop with 70 parents, teachers and community members at a neighboring K-3 school. We spent the first part of the evening discussing the proposed voting changes in the Reform Act. Most parents were enthusiastic and very willing to participate. I urged them to become candidates during the next LSC elections. Many said they preferred to help someone else. The principal of the school pleaded with them that she couldn't do it alone; she needed their participation since the present LSC parent members would no longer have children in the school this fall.

A parent then stood up and showed the front page of the Chicago Sun-Times. It said that Supt. Kimbrough had decided to cancel continuation of leases of non-public school buildings. This school is located in a leased former Catholic parochial school. Needless to say, the rest of the evening focused on how to keep the school open for September. The parents talked about organizing themselves. It was quite an experience to see the frustration in the faces of the parents,
teachers and community members. Again, Kimbrough should have consulted with principals and LSC members, instead of their learning about this through the media.

June 3 Kimbrough's new leasing policy would also affect our own overcrowded school. We have been looking for relief for five years. This year we learned that the neighborhood Catholic school was closing. Therefore, we repeatedly, but fruitlessly, tried to work with the real estate department at Central Office to lease the Catholic building and relieve our overcrowding. Now, presumably, there will be no relief for our overcrowding, but an additional 350 students will be coming to our school from the closed Catholic school.

June 20 Our Iowa and La Prueba scores for 1990-91 are in. (La Prueba is the bilingual standardized test.) The gains are very small. In many cases, there has been a year's growth from last year, but the students are still behind their respective grade levels. The gains at the first-grade level are the best. Second and third registered lower gains. The fourth-graders leveled off. There is very little gain at the fifth and sixth grades. I am also concerned with the small gains (if any) made by the bilingual students. Many have been in the program more than three years and are still doing poorly on both the Iowa [in English] and the La Prueba [in Spanish]. We need to strengthen both academic quality and teacher expectations. The LSC should look closely at next year's school improvement plan.

LOU, community

July 28 We were talking this week about measuring school performance. Much credence is given to dropout rates and to graduation rates, but the numbers we get only tell us how many entered, how many left and how many graduated—not whether the kids who started are the same ones who graduate. Until we learn to do more longitudinal tracking, following individual students from kindergarten through eighth grade or ninth through twelfth, some of these numbers have questionable or limited value.

LEE, central office

Aug. 16 The University of Chicago's nationally known social scientist Gary Orfield [now at Harvard] recently released the results of a year-long research study. Its general conclusion is that school reform in Chicago is not likely to work. The low educational achievement of CPS students is not because of big bureaucracy but because of the poverty and isolation of students.

The study has received very little attention in the media and very little attention from Chicago’s reform community. I suppose this is not the time to deal with poverty and isolation.

LAZARUS, teacher

Aug. 21 I taught the last session of a summer school class for teachers. We met at a suburban high school. The setting, while relatively austere with cement-block classroom walls, was serene. The absence of graffiti had a powerful affect on me. The contrast to my own CPS work setting, where graffiti became almost more commonplace than textbooks, has brought home to me how demeaned I have been by its existence and how diminished I have been by those who allowed it. Graffiti has been the unhappy symbol of our surrender to forces that have been allowed to get beyond our control.

OLIVIA, principal

Aug. 29 During the July brouhaha over closing and consolidating some schools, Supt. Kimbrough's aide, Robert Sampieri, said, "We find we are practicing an inequitable distribution of resources" within the system, apparently concluding that the schools slated for consolidation were sucking up an unfair portion of the board’s resources, thus justifying the recommendation for their closing.

Inequitable distribution of resources within CPS is a fact of life, but Sampieri’s conclusion is topsy-turvy. Principals, teachers and parents (especially from smaller schools) have been complaining for years that resources are not equally distributed; as everyone (except Sampieri) knows, the magnet schools, CANAL schools and "effective" schools, not the "regular" neighborhood schools, are the recipients of favorable distribution.

I, of course, had heard that magnet schools received additional funds, but I had no idea of the extent of the administration’s generosity—until recently. A newly assigned interim principal in my district was trying to decipher his magnet school’s budget and asked for my assistance. In helping him, I discovered his school had more than $900,000 in discretionary funds. Mind you, this $900,000 was above and beyond the funds generated by the normal per-pupil allocation formulas; almost a million dollars in discretionary funds for one school!

PUD, student

Sept. 15 School started on time; I’m shocked! As with most first days of school, everyone was fairly happy to be back.

Our administration is encouraging students to fill out lunch forms, whether they qualify or not. The school needs the state funds provided for each student who does qualify.

Many students enrolled in a hotel management work-study course are disappointed; funds have been cut for that.

College-bound seniors are very aggrieved about the idea
of a teachers strike, saying that the government should do what “Old Man Daley” would have done: lock everyone up and negotiate until something happens. Graduating on time is very important, and we shouldn’t have to carry the extra burden of school closure.

Sept. 23 It’s kind of funny how some people who have the best ideas seldom attend the LSC meetings. I have a problem with one member of our council because she pops in and out of meetings—admittedly, with bright ideas she finds at other schools, but she can’t seem to make herself available for genuine participation.

Those who know are ignored

ELIZABETH, teacher

April 6 It seems that the state Legislature knows about reform, the Board of Education knows about reform, Mayor Daley knows about reform—but the teachers and children on whom reform has the most impact cannot possibly know about reform. Let’s face it, most people feel kids don’t know anything about anything anyway. Teenagers, especially those who serve on their LSCs, have opinions and need to be able to express them.

April 20 In the magazine Substance, the CTU's recording secretary, Pam Massarky, suggested that rather than two teachers on each LSC, one teacher be replaced by a career service representative. Pam! Teachers make up only two-elevenths of the LSC now. Why would you remove a teacher? Recommend a twelfth seat be added for a career service rep, but don’t take one of ours away.

May 4 It’s amazing that anyone still wants to know how a lowly teacher, victim of the monetary and morale bankruptcy in CPS, feels. The Consortium on Chicago School Research is conducting a survey of teachers this month—an inquiry into our feelings about school reform. It says in the literature, “The information you provide can help your school and the whole city better understand teachers’ concerns.” I don’t want you to understand me. I want you to do something for us—my children and me. I’m tired of rhetoric.

June 29 The powers that be on Pershing Road struggle with which schools to close for September and which personnel to terminate. They, along with CTU President Jackie Vaughn, struggle to find an agreeable solution that will allow personnel to be in the schools on Day One. It is such a complicated time for the board, and yet a certain group of people representing every school in the city of Chicago is locked out of these crucial debates and the ultimate decision making. These are the members of the LSCs: the hope of the schools, so-called, disenfranchised before they really had any power.

CARLOS, teacher

April 22 Even though it is spring vacation, LSC members are informally discussing CPS financial problems. We feel that Central Office should close from June 25 until August 24, 1991, except for personnel and a section of payroll for summer school purposes. The reform office should also close; they have no impact whatsoever on schools and LSCs. The district offices should be abolished; schools and LSCs have been operating without them. Community and civic organizations have filled the gap when LSCs needed reform information.

LSCs should work directly with offices like personnel, payroll, purchasing, transportation and facilities. We all agree that the other offices are just fluff and serve no purpose for the schools and the students. Services are still not being provided because the middle and top managers are not aware what is really going on in the schools. The local school council members are. The principals are. The teachers are. The parents, the community members and the children are.

PUD, student

July 24 Recently, I joined other student representatives of Chicago public high schools on a trip to Springfield to lobby legislators to vote for more school funding. Arriving at our departure station at the designated hour, 6:30 a.m., we were deceitfully greeted by air-conditioned motor coaches. As we tried to board, we were told, “These buses are for dignitaries only.” The student reps were left to wait more than an hour and a half for a yellow school bus.

In Springfield, we were introduced to both the Illinois House and Senate. They didn’t readily address our cause; I honestly don’t believe they paid much attention to us at all.

After a lunch break, a team of students, me included, petitioned the House members. However, they were all in committee meetings. Senator Berman assured us that the Senate unanimously voted in favor of the school board’s cause.

Our mission seemed useless, but the experience won’t be forgotten.

The elusive quorum

ELIZABETH, teacher

April 20 The Amoco Corp. wrote this week and asked me, along with my other LSC members, to nominate one outstanding parent at my school. Sorry, Amoco, not this year. The criteria specify people who actively contribute their time and efforts to support Chicago school improvements. My fellow
council delegates can't even attend monthly meetings.

April 22  Yeow! We had an LSC meeting this month, our first since November! It was no fluke that we finally got a quorum again five months after our November meeting: we had parent report card pickup day both months. That's what brought these elected officials out—not an LSC meeting.

May 20  No LSC meeting. No quorum. We didn't even come close. I was the sole member present. I chatted with the five-person audience, one a parent who had come to address the council and try to get support from the parents on the council for a parent patrol. Our school is in an area of the city where gang recruitment is heavy, and there is danger for our youngsters traveling to and from school.

June 29  To recap our LSC's year at Inner-City Elementary School. We had three meetings out of a possible ten. The secretary always sent out notices for each scheduled meeting. The members always had the agendas and necessary paper work early. What happened to the sense of duty and voluntarism that led them to put their names on ballots two short years ago?

Lazarus, teacher

May 21  For the first time I can remember, except for one instance of very bad weather, we do not have a quorum for an LSC meeting. This is also the first meeting our current principal has missed.

June 18  For the second month in a row we have no quorum at a regularly scheduled LSC meeting. I am appalled at the indifference of some members toward the council's responsibilities. Granted, two members were lobbying for reform legislation in Springfield, but that does not excuse the rest. Only one parent, one community member and one teacher representative showed up. To her credit, the principal designate attended. While some useful information is shared, no official action could be taken.

LSCs at work

Marcia, parent

Marcia was a diarist in our first issue of Catalyst (February 1990) but found herself too busy with LSC duties to continue her journal keeping. She now returns. Marcia was skeptical and frustrated then:

Oct. 19, 1989  Most of the council members do not understand what school reform is all about. When I suggested that we set up committees and by-laws, they all had to leave. One par-

ent told me she would like to resign. . . . She did not know it was supposed to be a lot of meetings and a lot of reading, plus she does not understand what is going on.

Oct. 27, 1989  This is just one big mistake. It should have been certain schools having school reform, not all of them, especially this school. It just seems to me they just ran for the local school council for a popularity contest, or something. Marcia is skeptical and frustrated now, with perhaps a hint of hope.

March 23  There exist too many forces that seek to destroy any manner of school-based management. The election process we followed two years ago was fairly good; I've heard that it was one of the cleanest elections ever conducted in Chicago. I just wonder: what has it to do with educating children?

Reform groups are meeting to hammer out solutions to the non-constitutionality of the LSCs. I have been attending as many of these meetings as possible and reporting back to our council. The one person, one vote matter has now somehow gotten translated into a three-vote versus a ten-vote scheme.

I can't figure out what the big deal is. At our school we're facing drugs, violence, prostitution, homelessness, gangs and lack of money. Our children are up against these problems on a daily basis and are still expected to get an education. The voting schemes for LSCs seem a world away from all this. Can I generate and maintain interest in the constitutional issue? I do want the matter solved so we as partners can continue our work.

April 4  Two occurrences this spring have brought greater parental involvement in our LSC. The first was a break-in at the school; it was completely vandalized. We had a special meeting of council members, parents, teachers and interested others; our alderman and an aldermanic hopeful attended. This incident, as devastating as it was, did manage to bring our council into focus on the condition of the school and an admission that the environment plays a critical role in the educational development of the children. A special council committee was formed. This may be the start of something big here.

The second episode was graduation—not the event itself, yet, but our beginning to plan for it. Most parents are taking part in activities that lead up to the ceremony. It makes us feel good to see that many African-American children full of hope and promise.

Lazarus, teacher

April 9  The LSC security committee meets. Youth officers assigned to the building attend, and one especially is anxious
to make positive suggestions. However, it is not clear to me that any of his ideas are recorded, even though he offers them thoughtfully and with the hope they will be put into effect.

**May 7** An LSC budget meeting. The question arises again, as last year, about funding teacher aides’ positions to the extent we do at our school. Apparently, no funding formulas exist for high schools. More than 90% of our discretionary money goes for these positions. Last year the council authorized the expenditure on the condition that the performance of the aides be monitored; no such reports were ever presented by administration.

Research on how other high schools have spent their state Chapter I money is interesting; most seems to be spent to retain teacher aides (salaries and benefits).

**May 14** An LSC meeting. The council is distressed to hear that teachers have had to raise private funds to maintain office equipment. Would a corporation ask its office workers to provide the photocopy machines or their own word processors and telephones?

The LSC wants joint training with the PPAC. Unfortunately, the mere thought of one or two all-day Saturday sessions drains me. I am devoid of emotional reserves.

**June 20** At the final faculty meeting of the school year, the outgoing principal recaps his years in education with special emphasis on the winning athletic teams at schools he has served in various capacities. On his list of items he will not miss are the local school council and the school secretary’s telling him the ladies from the LSC are in the building and wish to see him now. Across the hall from the faculty meeting room, members of the council are preparing food for the faculty; they speak to each other in Spanish and laugh good-naturedly as they go about their tasks, unaware of the comments being made at the faculty meeting. Despite the general ripple of approval throughout the audience at the principal’s remarks, few in the room will hesitate to partake of the breakfast paid for out of funds raised by the council this year.

**AMELIA, parent**

**May 6** The school management subcommittee of the school improvement committee has probably been the most useful committee of our LSC. An outside community person became chair, and the subcommittee pulled in many interested teachers, parents and community people. There were always at least 20 persons who attended its meetings, which were held every other week all semester. The chair was exceptionally good about sending out reminder notices of meetings, writing up summaries of the last meeting, keeping new topics on the agenda and letting members express their views but not letting everything degenerate into a do-nothing gripe session—which is the way the PPAC operated under Mr. Union all this year and the previous year. Our school management committee took up the slack from the PPAC.

It was also needed the take up the slack of the principal’s administration. For example, she told me recently that she feels it her role to be the defender of all the kids whose parents are not able to come up to school and fight for them against the system or the bad teachers or the unlucky breaks or whatever. The way this attitude manifests itself is that she is a soft touch—and everyone knows it; exceptions to the rules are always made and she always overrules her teachers if the issue is between a student and a teacher. This is, unfortunately, a formula for mutiny among the teachers, for laxness in discipline and for too much time spent on individual kids and not enough on management. Hence, the school management committee.

This new committee was basically concerned this year with three major areas: (1) school enrollment (size and constituencies), (2) security and (3) building maintenance.

Our chair brought in the police officers assigned to the school, the security people from the neighborhood institutions, the head of the engineering staff, a terrific consultant who used to be one of the best principals in the city, and so on. The consultant pointed out that the school was being run in a reactive rather than a proactive way, so that no one knew ahead of time what was expected; therefore, after the fact it was always easier to claim ignorance and avoid any consequences of violation of rules.

In its final report to the council, the committee made two major recommendations: (1) Make a concerted effort to tighten up enrollment and socialize new families into the concept that they have a responsibility to abide by the rules, to provide real phone numbers and addresses so they can be reached and to make sure their kids are abiding by the rules and doing their work. (2) Issue a systematic discipline code (including a strong stand against guns in the school) and secure a full-time disciplinarian so that the principal can get on with managing the school. The proposed discipline code written by the committee was accepted by the council in principal pending a rewrite. It seemed too negative to the council members whose kids get in trouble now and then. There are indeed several council members with problem kids, and for these members any talk of discipline is simply unacceptable; their standards for proper behavior are so much lower than anything I knew when I was in school.

Freeing up the principal from the task of disciplining seemed to us very important. With her philosophy it has been difficult to create an atmosphere of order and structure within the school or for her to give time to get on the engineer’s case or to follow through on things the council has passed. For instance, two years ago the Title I money was allocated in part for a conflict resolution fund to set up a program to help students learn to mediate conflicts themselves so every
potential fight did not turn into a bloody fisticuffs with suspensions all around—or a session in the principal’s office. But nothing has been done to implement the conflict resolutions plan.

(At our July meeting we at long last had a “conflict resolutions” proposal presented to the council. It was developed by a volunteer parent, not a council member. He perceived that student conflicts this year are worse than last and decided that if the PPAC and Ms. Adams could not come up with a plan and personnel in two years, then he would. We went with it.)

About “the engineer’s case”: The committee itself got on that. Our chief engineer, Mr. D, is, I think, either an impossible man or a terrible racist. He is white; the principal, most of Mr. D’s staff and most of the school’s kids are black. He has not been keeping the school clean or fixing broken windows. He claims he has no control over his staff. Naturally, this possibly racial issue is never, never addressed.

Our committee chair said to Mr. D, “We want those broken windows replaced and the school cleaned up to level. This is a community that does not tolerate boarded up windows on its high school. We will be meeting again in two weeks. Let us know if there is anything we can do to help in the meantime. We expect the windows to be fixed by our next meeting.” Mr. D offered many excuses, including union contract limitations and Board of Education regulations.

But the windows were replaced by the next meeting. Why? Our group wasn’t even the LSC itself but merely a subcommittee. The reason Mr. D acted was that our chair spoke with authority—much more authority than the principal and the council chair combined.

Our committee also took on the cleanliness issue. Our chair brought Mr. D’s boss to the school. There was a grand tour of the hot spots: filthy lunchroom, broken toilets, graffiti walls, glass shards, leaky roof, dangerous stair railings, etc. The first stop was the lunchroom, and what did the big chief see? A group of men sitting around doing nothing. When Mr. D (whose men don’t like him a bit) and the city supervisor and the principal and the council chair and our committee chair and the PTA chair entered, there was an immediate flurry of activity. Water was spilled on unswept floors, and six men hurriedly began stirring the mess with their mops. Our committee chair minced no words in describing this scene as typical and in cataloging the whole range of school maintenance mismanagement. Mr. D was given some time to rectify the situation, with a return inspection date set.

The usefulness of the committee is evident. It is counterproductive for teachers who care about education and life in the schools to bind themselves and their destinies to general incompetence among the non-professional staff. They should be fighting to get rid of bad workmanship in their support staffs, fighting for a good atmosphere for their teaching. Yet, in our school, Mr. Union, chair of the PPAC and also an LSC member, is bound by his position as union rep to defend the engineering staff and all other incompetent union people in the school; he seems forced to defend the status quo.

I am persuaded that to the extent CPS teachers are like our Mr. Union, and maintenance and service staff throughout the system are like ours, both the union and the bureaucracy will have to be broken before school reform can work. It is also clear to me that community people need to come into the schools and get active on committees and let the staffs know they are being watched, and let the principals know they are accountable—not just for a four-year contract but on a daily basis.

June 23 The chief engineer is doing more; also, equally or more important, the principal is demanding more and documenting in memos to him (with copies to the LSC) what is expected and not any longer letting him get away with doing nothing. So now we have a public record of what Mr. D. should be doing. All that pressure on Ms. Adams has worked wonders in strengthening her hand and encouraging her action.

In our school improvement plan draft we had a volunteer “requirement”; that is, every family has to give five hours of service per semester to the school—work on an LSC committee, come in and help a teacher, do hall duty for half a day, make phone calls for one of the fund raisers, be a room parent, etc.; perhaps even five hours in a parent-effectiveness training class. However, this voluntarism section was deleted from the SIP by our principal.
In two years our council failed miserably in getting the teachers to take a look at curriculum weaknesses or to try special curriculum experiments. We tried to encourage the teachers and leave it up to them to carry the ball. The message never got to them or it was distorted by Mr. Union, who simply wanted to destroy the credibility of the council. Our LSC chair for two years hasn’t had time to get to school and open LSC mail; Mr. Union took over the job and processed it from his point of view, tossing out items he preferred we never see, for instance. Mr. Union also makes copies of his version of LSC minutes and distributes these to the faculty in order that his interpretation of all meetings and votes be conveyed to them.

ROBIN, observer

Aug. 27 LSC meeting at School B. Everyone was happy because they won an Illinois Bell/Ameritech award of $10,000, and a major agenda item was how to spend the money. The principal said she wanted to be sure it wasn’t just spent on small items that would be used and forgotten, but rather on something that would make a long-term difference in the school—in effect, a memorial to this LSC and all the work they did that justified the recognition. Her idea was to upgrade the auditorium.

A teacher member proposed converting the teachers’ lunchroom into a parent/teacher resource center where teachers could work during the day and where parents could meet before school to make things for their children, see videotapes, use a computer, etc. The principal and the other teacher rep had reservations because this space is actually used as a classroom part of the time. But there was enthusiasm among the rest of the council members, and after much discussion the doubts were won over and the matter decided unanimously.

Sept. 16 LSC meeting at School B. This was the last meeting of the council, and that defined the mood. The principal was pleased that she had managed to save the $33,000 almost taken from the school’s Chapter I budget, but even with that money there was still a problem of what to do about the fact that the reading program, a support teacher, an after-school program and the supplies budget had been cut. She made specific proposals, but the council didn’t want to deal with changes in staffing until more is known about what will happen with the CTU contract and with further cuts. I think some members also simply didn’t feel up to making any hard decisions—the new council could just do that !

The meeting was long, and the energy level seemed to sink continually (or was it just me?)—until people were brought back to life by, of all things, a raffle. They had spent a long time trying to figure out what to do about the lack of funds for supplies, rejecting such ideas as finding items to cut in the Chapter I budget, charging a fee to students or having a candy sale. But then a teacher member advanced an eloquent argument for a raffle. She managed to wake people up and persuade them that it was a relatively cheap and easy way to raise money. A committee was quickly recruited from among those present to approach businesses to contribute prizes.

When it came time to decide on a committee to implement the plan for spending their $10,000 Bell/Ameritech award money, the LSC enthusiastically agreed that they—all the members of the old council—would constitute the committee, regardless of whether they were on the new council!

ELIZABETH, teacher

Sept. 9 Inner-City Elementary School has adopted a dress code: white and blue for students. All students must be in uniform by October 1—so says Mrs. Adams, our LSC chair. I am a teacher rep on the LSC, and I never heard about this. Parents have been calling enraged that they were not informed sooner before money had been spent on other clothes. This type of behavior reflects quite badly on the LSC, the school and the principal. None of us knew anything about Mrs. Adams’ actions. It seems she and her cronies had been out knocking on doors in the community, so some people did know about the matter.

But this is not an LSC at work.

Principal selection

CARLOS, teacher

March 14 The LSC met to discuss two major issues: the budget for 1991-92 and the principal’s evaluation. The evaluation process issue provoked good discussion. Some council members felt the public and non-LSC teachers should be part of the evaluating committee. Other members, including me, felt this is a personnel matter between the principal and the LSC.

LAZARUS, teacher

April 9 This evening I receive a call from a council member to report for an interview before the principal selection committee tomorrow evening. (I had earlier submitted my application.)

April 10 It is curious to be on the other side of the table for the interview. I see that the LSC groundwork laid earlier for
interviewing applicants has been put to good use. The chair welcomes me and encourages me to make myself at home. I am certain this welcome will be repeated to every interviewee. The council asks if I object to having the interview taped; I think it an excellent idea. The chair announces there will be ten questions asked. And so there are. I find I repeat myself with the answers to questions asked later in the interview. The hour and the weight of their responsibility show on the tired faces of the council members. It is past 8 p.m., and they have at least two interviews after mine.

April 18 I am scheduled for a second interview for the position of principal. The selection process has cut the applicants down from more than 40 to a half dozen candidates.

At our LSC's general meeting, principal selection becomes the primary topic. There are some angry exchanges among council members; the strain of the decision-making process is apparent. The house is two-thirds full of spectators; the issue is a great draw. Amid obvious testiness, an executive session is called. (Although it tried to obtain an extension on the state-mandated April 15 deadline, the council was not able to get one.)

After a relatively short closed session, the council returns with three names, in order of preference. It could not agree on a choice. Therefore, the three names, according to procedure, will be submitted to the district superintendent for selection. My name is not one of the three.

April 19 In faculty buzz groups, word spreads that one of the three finalists is questionable. Doubts arise about the ability of the council to decide soundly and to check on candidates beyond the resume and interview. The specter of "outside influence" raises its head. The integrity of the council is at stake. Speculation throws a Byzantine pall over the council's decision.

Over these nearly two years of reform, it has never been easy for me to continually defend the actions of the council to the faculty, although much work has gone into explaining the council's positions. To its credit, the council has made good decisions favorable to the teaching staff. But on something so important as the selection of a principal, its judgment must be impeccable. If not, the chasm between council and faculty is not likely to be bridged.

Stories abound of other schools and their experiences in principal selection. At one, where three very fine candidates were vying for the position, a wise district superintendent sat in on follow-up interviews to advise the council of differences among the candidates that might help them make a good choice. At another, the contract had been signed before the council realized it had made a dreadful mistake. What will be our experience?

May 15 Many at our school preferred to retain the current administration, which, from their perspective, had operated with a "live and let live" approach. But what professional educator could in good conscience live with our dropout rate and with the waste it represents?

May 28 At an informal meeting at our school, the district superintendent announces the choice for principal: a hardworking faculty member who has devoted many years and resources to the school. Faculty members present are delighted, and I believe their response reflects that of the rest of the staff. Some members of the council do not appear to share the joy of the occasion. Whether this stems from dissatisfaction with the choice or with the district superintendent for not granting an extension or for some other reason is not clear. The feelings appear not to be directed personally at the successful candidate. However, the attitude of these council members lacks grace at a time when there should be rejoicing. The principal-designate wisely bypasses this snag and directs the group's attention toward beginning to work together to improve the school. At this stage, well past the deadline, our school improvement plan contains fragments of department ideas but no central core to hold everything together. There is much work to be done. The council has already set a Saturday date for training and working on the SIP with the new principal.

June 15 An all-day training session for our LSC, the PPAC and other interested parties. Some good signs: the principal-designate attends and shows considerable interest in mastering the intricacies of reform. Council members and faculty cluster with their respective constituencies, but activities during the session force them to intermingle; neither group seems to suffer from the exchange.

June 21 The last day of the school year is spent more productively than might have been expected. Early in the day, the faculty and staff are in small groups discussing their opinions prompted by a list of questions on attendance procedures prepared by the principal-designate. The general feeling is that positive things are beginning to happen.

CPS budget deficit: school closings

LAZARUS, teacher

April 28 The departments will work on their school improvement plans during the following week. Any plans requiring funding will have to be set aside. Somehow the budget process has been separated from school planning. The tail wags the dog. Again.

May 10 The list of schools that might be closed appears in the newspaper. A recent major rehab project at our school led us to believe that ours would likely not be closed. For once we were right.

On the list is one school that struggled with considerable success to improve its image through the reform movement process. It has a long history in the black community. Newly
arrived blacks in the city early in the century saw the school as a mecca for their dreams and aspirations. The school is a powerful symbol. Its closing will not go unchallenged.

Another school on the list recently went through a very difficult principal selection process. Was the anxiety, the turmoil, the moral dilemma all for naught?

We are in a game of Russian roulette. The fragile structure of reform must be carefully tended, no assault.

May 17 At the end of the school day, the custodian comes to sweep my classroom. The idea of privatization of custodial services has made him especially gloomy.

It is no accident that the CTU has been able to stage their most effective strikes with the support of other unions in the schools. What will happen if other school workers are not unionized?

June 14 As a cost-cutting device, the board has circulated a letter among its employees asking them to report the insurance carrier on any second job they might have. In what other profession would it be assumed that the employees have second jobs?

July 3 A rumor is afloat that our school is closing. I reassure people that it is only closed temporarily this summer for asbestos removal. However, the 5:30 news kills my reassurances. Now our school is on the list. It comes as no great surprise to me.

This is the legacy of years of administrative incompetence. The school has been a battleground not only for gangs and students with grudges against each other but also for a vindictive principal who played favorites and used intimidation to thwart those with legitimate complaints, and a smarting faculty who struck back by rejecting any innovation requiring a referendum. We have been concerned too little about learning. Students and their parents absented themselves rather than become the victims of our internecine feud and the chaos accompanying it. Rather than recognizing it as a symptom of a larger problem, our subsequent drop in enrollment has been shrugged off with indifference. But it did not go unnoticed at higher levels. The bill has come due.

Now, on the verge of a new era with a change in leadership, we are told our doors may be closed, the comatose patient consigned to oblivion.

The new principal in conjunction with LSC members and a community organization begins to mobilize the community. A meeting date is set for early next week to map strategy for saving the school.

Phone lines are humming. The word is spread. The LSC will have announcements made at church services over the weekend.

July 4 A call from a former student in Texas. News of our plight travels swiftly.

July 5 Faculty come to the school to see how they can help. A phone bank is set up. Each contact takes responsibility for other calls. A phone chain covers all faculty and staff. Callers then turn to contacting all students and their families.

Channel 2 phones to announce it is sending a TV camera crew in 40 minutes to interview teachers and others. The tempo of activity increases.

A mass meeting in the community is to be held in three days; 12,000 flyers will be distributed to advertise it.

July 7 A planning meeting for the mass meeting. Some planners arrive exhausted after hours of walking up and down streets distributing flyers on one of the hottest days of the summer.

July 8 The mass meeting. More than a thousand show up: faculty and staff, students and their brothers and sisters, parents, community residents, alumni whose ages span several generations, workers from a social service agency housed at the school, local politicians or their representatives, other CPS principals whose schools are in similar jeopardy.

Carefully chosen speakers are restricted to two-minute presentations, and translations are made where necessary. The starting time is calculated to ensure that videotapes are ready for the 10 o’clock news.

The meeting ends with “We Shall Overcome,” sung with everyone holding hands. Ethnic and age differences disappear; a teacher takes the hand of a small child or a different ethnic group. This crisis is working miracles. One of our LSC members, missing for months, managed to appear for the cameras.

July 10 LSC meeting. During the meeting, the principal receives a phone call from central office. The board’s legal
department needs certain documents, such as LSC minutes for two years. Why? The board's lawyers are defending us against our former principal who is suing the council for discrimination based on age, gender and race. Is there no end to our problems? We wonder where the former principal was last Monday, at the mass meeting, if she is so anxious to get her job back.

**July 15** The auditorium at Whitney Young High School is almost filled to capacity with supporters from our school when our team makes its presentation to the board's committee on finance and audit. The team—our new principal, a faculty member and two LSC members—cite programs and achievements of the students. The 30-minute summary goes quickly. The committee seems receptive to the arguments of our team. President Bristow delivers the sign-off: contact your state legislators and demand more funds for the schools.

The room begins to fill with supporters from the next school scheduled to testify. Among them is a former neighbor. How can I help but wish him and his school good luck? These proposed closings have pitted us all against each other. But why should we have to accept these terms? It makes me feel better about myself to offer them encouragement. Downstairs the lobby is filled with yet another school's team and its supporters. What the hell, good luck to us all!

**MARCIA, parent**

**April 20** Our school, according to rumor, is on the list of schools to be closed. This comes as no surprise to me. It is a large, old building in need of major repairs; and our enrollment is ever decreasing. These are, in one sense, legitimate reasons to put our school on the list. But such reasoning does not factor in the human elements for keeping the community school. We have decided to fight central office on any attempts to close us down.

A special meeting of our LSC is called, and we begin our campaign. Council members go door-to-door throughout the community soliciting support. A public relations committee is formed, and all board meetings are now monitored by council members.

Everyone agrees that to ship our children to neighboring schools would subject them to even greater gang pressure; they undergo enough already on home turf without having to travel through unfamiliar gang territory.

**May 27** Our LSC has been meeting weekly (and I almost daily) making plans to keep our school open. We have joined forces with several other high school LSCs. Our community is not isolated in its concern and problems.

We are still monitoring the board's budget-reduction efforts. The board simply cannot balance its budget on the backs of kids. The educational development (which includes general welfare and safety) of every child must come first—before jobs, before positions, before a balanced budget.

**June 19** Success! We—a coordinated community, staff and LSC—managed to keep our school open, at least for one more year. We learned a lot from this process, and we came closer together.

**OLIVIA, principal**

**Aug. 29** Ours was one of those schools identified in July to be consolidated with another school. At that time, public pressure kept the board from moving forward on closings and consolidation, but now with the pressure to balance the budget coming from all sides, who knows what will happen?

We have to be practical and consider the real possibility that our little school will be consolidated with a bigger one. The reality is that when push comes to shove, quality education, good instructional leadership and all the research findings on the benefits of smaller schools versus bigger ones go out the window. The issue is money. The bottom line is that CPS simply does not have enough money to meet all its obligations, and cuts have to be made. Now. Today. The budget must be balanced so it can be approved by the School Finance Authority and classes can start on time.

The recurring complaint I hear from my teachers is that they are so tired of going through this almost annual crisis of "not enough money to operate the schools so programs or benefits or salaries have to be cut." The timing is always the same: late August. Apparently the people who run the school system live in a reality unknown to the rest of us, a reality where employee unions will not only accept wage freezes but will agree to give-backs, a reality where the federal government will release previously restricted dollars to be used for whatever by the board, a reality where additional funds will materialize out of thin air. Granted, miracles do happen, but to depend on miracles happening, over and over again on an annual basis, is more than a little naive. It reeks of incompetence.

**CPS budget deficit: morale, take-aways**

**CARLOS, teacher**

**June 24** Summer school is here. We lost two summer school positions that would have serviced 40 students. This was a result of Supt. Kimbrough's plans to keep state reform funds away from the schools. These moneys were already ours, and we had allocated and approved them for summer school.
ELIZABETH, teacher

June 1 The CPS budget deficit is projected to be the largest ever. Chicago school reform was targeted to bring improvements to city schools. What does the money crunch do to the work of the LSCs? It puts an end to creating curricular changes for many LSCs. Friends report that some things LSCs have on the table have been put on hold to wait for the outcome of the money wars.

June 29 The June Substance is full of positions Supt. Kimbrough proposes to cut to help offset the budget deficit. How can these positions be cut when the LSCs have used existing school budgets to finance them? Kimbrough has always given Chicago school reform the highest praise. Was that only so much lip service, Mr. Kimbrough? I think so if you rush in and undo what your LSCs have just done.

Aug. 31 I have been a public school teacher in Chicago for 19 years. I have been in the uneviable position of a striking teacher no fewer than eight times during those years. This year has all the makings of a "strike year."

Sept. 7 The first day for teachers went smoothly. As usual, the principal and his staff had organized everything for us teachers: a handbook with all the information you'll need in life at one school, copies of necessary forms (e.g., field trip request forms), fire drill instructions, attendance books already set up, a series of workshops scheduled, etc.

What was the talk on Day One? Praise of the handbook? Joy at our return? Chagrin at our return? Anticipation about our students? None of the above. It all centered around how long we would be in school before we went on strike. With this attitude, who is ready to begin the school year?

The union agreed to work as a sign of good faith while negotiations continue. Does that mean we work a year in "good faith"? a month? a week? At least a date for a strike vote would be something definite.

CPS budget deficit: view from Pershing Road

LEE, central office

April 26 During the past two weeks, the Chicago Sun-Times did an extensive series on the physical condition of CPS buildings. Titled "Schools in Ruins," it carefully documented the sad state of facilities. Not enough funds are allocated to address the needs. The series also pointed out that run-down school buildings are not unique to Chicago. It is a national problem with New York, Detroit and many other cities in the same situation.

The nation is willing to mobilize half a million men and women and billions of dollars to wage a war halfway around the world to protect the property rights of a Kuwaiti monarch but does not have the resolve and the sense to invest in the education of its children. The nation is indeed at risk. Is our education president taking notice?

May 3 The superintendent disclosed the whopping budget deficit this week. The reaction was predictable. The reformers said the numbers were untrue, the superintendent was crying wolf. The governor—the education governor—said there was no money in the state treasury and no hope of help from the Legislature. The mayor—the education mayor—said not to expect a bailout from the city and not even to think about a property tax increase, even though the tax in Chicago as well as the proportion of the tax going to education is much lower than the suburbs.

Belt tightening is needed, and the bloated bureaucracy is where it is needed most, so many say. Never mind that the bureaucracy has already been cut to comply with the requirements of the reform act. Never mind that if the bureaucracy is cut further, some essential systemwide functions—such as payroll, purchasing and facilities—will suffer. And never mind that even if the bureaucracy is totally eliminated, it will barely make a dent in the total deficit.

What is it like to be constantly a target of criticism and cuts? Not pleasant. I feel vulnerable because cuts and administrative shake-ups have become an annual ritual. Sometimes I feel that no matter how much I do or how well, it is not enough or good enough. My commitment to school reform is always suspect: I can't possibly be interested in improving education. It has affected my morale and my self-esteem.

More and more I think about quitting, even though it would create a hardship and would be difficult to shift gears. And I will lose the investment I have made in the system and in my career. Working in the field of education has not turned out to be quite the noble profession I thought it was going to be coming out of graduate school. More recent graduates must know better because few have chosen to join me.

July 19 This week the board completed public hearings on proposed school closings. Listening to the school representatives, it was clear that none of these schools deserved to be closed. They all had wonderful programs, motivated students, hard-working teachers and active parents. None of these schools was operating below capacity. Even the facilities were in good condition; no leaky roofs and falling plaster in these buildings.

Aug. 23 The budget deficit has been in the news all summer. It is a hot potato nobody wants to touch. The mayor in particular has sought to distance himself, saying that this is not his board and his hands are tied when it comes to making board appointments. His honor conveniently forgets that he was his hand-picked interim board that signed a three-year pact with the teachers' union giving hefty raises with money the board did not have. I wonder if this mayoral fuss is a prelude to doing away with the process of board appointment.
contained in the reform act. Who was it that said, "Chicago ain't ready for reform"?

During his election campaign, the mayor made so much about wanting to be the education mayor and place a high priority on school reform that he promised to appoint a deputy mayor for education to deal with school issues. Whatever happened to this position? Well, he did create and fill it, entirely at his discretion, with someone who did more to put down public schools than to get them better. Now the position has sat vacant for several months at a critical time when the reform law is being modified, the public schools are threatened with a strike and several board members are up for reappointment. The mayor certainly cannot complain about his hands being tied here.

Aug. 28 The board is frantically looking to save more money. "The time for surgery is over; from here on, it's butchery," said one member.

The Finance Committee approved 100 more cuts in central office, this in addition to the 300 made last month. Here we go again. The place is buzzing with rumors of who has been cut. Needless to say, we're all worried. Working here, one knows that one should always be prepared; yet, one is never quite ready.

There is concern as to how these cuts will affect our ability to provide the services we are required to provide. Cutting fat is one thing, but now the cuts are down to the bone. They will hurt some essential services. There is also concern that the wrong people will be let go, for one reason or another. Further, the end result of bumping (whereby one employee can replace the next lower in seniority) can easily be that a person with certain qualifications and experience is replaced by a person with totally different qualifications and experience, often quite inappropriate for the job that needs doing. Above all, there is concern that the drastic cuts are being made without an accompanying reorganization of the administrative structure. And the role of the districts still remains unclear. A serious and thoughtful reorganization could foster the efficiency and facilitate the changes in service delivery that genuine school reform requires.

May 15 A letter about the busing matter finally came from the board. It was dated in March and stated simply that the board "saw no reason to change its policy." There was no mention of the fact that buses were going half-empty and that our school only wanted to use those empty seats on the buses. Ato that March letter was a letter dated in May, saying that they were very sorry the first letter had not been sent in a timely fashion. Why all the elaborate charade about having supposedly written a reply in March and not mailed it? If, indeed, one was dictated in March and not typed by the office staff until May, then someone needs to be fired if this is typical; no business could run with a secretary who was two months behind on transcribing dictations. I think it was the mention in CATALYST that got central office activated. Otherwise, they probably had no intention of bothering to reply.

The only reply to the gun issue brought up at this same February meeting was a couple of photocopied quotations from some previous legal case to the effect that expulsions were not allowed for certain classifications of special ed kids. There was no general expression of concern that this is a problem, no support for a strong stand against guns in the schools. They dared not say anything that could be interpreted as being soft on guns, either. In fact, there was really no response at all—a typical political side-stepping of the matter.

Someone needs to address this issue and make it public and get the city to insist on an overall board policy. No Guns. It doesn’t matter if this or that kid happened to be misguided and was really nice. (A few serial killers recently have been “really nice,” so said their neighbors before they knew the tragic truth.) It matters that other children’s lives are at risk, teachers’ lives are at risk, the school as an institution where teaching and learning can go on is at grave risk.

Two weeks ago I was at a school in another city, where our family is moving in August. I needed to have a look at the high school our daughter will attend. It is in a large urban area. The school is no more than 40% white, with all socioeconomic levels and many different languages spoken among the students’ families.

I asked the assistant principal about guns. There had been a shooting death of a student at the school in the early 1980s. The school closed for three days, and the faculty met and figured out what kind of policies they could institute to get control of the school. When the students returned, the faculty was united, there were new rules, new ID policies, new gun-control policies and a new organization of this very large school into smaller units, or “houses” as they were called, each with a different emphasis and different learning-style methods.

However, each house followed the same basic rules, one of which was that parents had to sign a document asserting that they and their son or daughter understood guns were never allowed in school. There it was right in the registration packet. No embarrassment about it. No feelings that if we

Guns ‘n’ buses

AMELIA, parent

The following is a continuation of Amelia’s concern and her earlier Diaries entries about busing (the 1990 order that only seventh- and eighth-graders could board school buses; see CATALYST, March 1991, page 37) and about guns (see CATALYST, June 1991, page 29).
talk about guns, things will get worse. Just a simple NO GUNS policy up front, loud and clear.

I was impressed. That school, more than half again as large as ours, was clean, quiet, organized and without graffiti or broken windows. There was no sign that chaos had once reigned, that this school had been out of control. And it did not have teachers who were so strict. My daughter and I attended classes where lots of independent work and casual but purposeful movement about the room was encouraged. There was mutual respect between teacher and students, a sense that they were all in the educational enterprise together. It appeared a happy place.

I repeat: the school was diverse, not monolithic. Its program included complete college prep and complete vocational training all under one roof. But its keys to success were what I’ve been wishing for our school: a critical mass of middle-class kids, a very good administration and lots of teacher input. And no one, I’ll bet, had to check with downtown to get the windows repaired.

Teachers and reform

ELIZABETH, teacher

April 20 An article in Substance on restructuring the day at Brentano School concludes, “When change is implemented and planned by those making the changes, it has a greater chance for success.” Every time I read a phrase like that or think about how reform is supposed to work, I regret that this whole concept will not work at Inner-City Elementary School. My teacher colleagues and large do not want change. They are strictly hard working to preserve the status quo. I guess I’m always talking about what our parents won’t do—but many of my colleagues are equally resistant. Reform is not the answer if it is but a word on a legal document.

Do I believe reform will not work in Chicago at large, or am I so disgusted with most of my LSC members and some of my faculty colleagues that I’m convinced reform will not work at Inner-City Elementary? Has my negative personal experience left me so jaded that I’m ready to write off the entire reform movement? Maybe I really do believe reform can work. Or is the chain only as strong as its weakest link?

July 1 The Teachers Task Force is offering summer training programs in roles and responsibilities of the PPAC, group dynamics and key PPAC issues: budgeting, SIPS, nurturing the teaching environment, rethinking curriculum and testing, and enhancing communication. The chair of our PPAC indicated to me that he would be attending these sessions. Great! He seems dedicated enough, worked hard last year and does not yet suffer from my fatigue; I have been beating my head against a stone wall for so long that at this stage of the reform game it may be a terminal illness for me.

Until teachers assume a leadership role in restructuring the system, empowerment is meaningless. In my school, perhaps 5 or 10 percent of all teachers are interested in any kind of leadership role. I don’t think this is the exception in the city, rather the rule. The PPAC is a joke. Only about 5 percent of the staff attends meetings on any sort of regular basis, and only three persons with significant consistency.

LAZARUS, teacher

May 15 A department meeting on the SIP provides the occasion for confusion and frustration as our department’s simple yet effective format must be rewritten to fit the one mandated by the Board of Education; the board’s is an improvement over last year’s format but an encumbrance nonetheless. The SIP process should facilitate the end of education; it should work for us, not against us. Despite the restrictive nature of the format, department members begin to discuss how to teach, not in an atmosphere of certainty but one of probing, of beginning to confront real problems of learning in the classroom. We have begun to talk to, not at, each other.

Our school plan this year will win no prizes. We will enter the third year of reform “fixin’ to get started.” The centipede’s toes have begun to twitch, but the message has not reached its brain yet.

May 31 A PPAC meeting. A decision is made to postpone a vote on the PPAC structure and, consequently, its personnel until early in September. My hope was that the election would be held now before the end of the school year, to put the new PPAC in place over the summer. I feel we have been waiting for almost three years for reform to begin in seriousness at our school; I am impatient at having to wait until yet another September.

I am disinclined to attend a training session where information will be given on the roles of the LSC, PPAC and administration. My fellow PPAC members do not understand that I mastered the alphabet a long time ago and have already become a rapacious reader. Even though I have done extensive training for the CTU, I feel they see me as somehow disloyal to our group. They are newly arrived at the door of reform. I feel the need to get on with other things while the others catch up.

Nurturing the dream of reform has been expensive. After two and a half years, I am battered and drained, and occasionally bitter. At our school, I have seen excellent ideas go nowhere. Now that there is the hope of real implementation of ideas, I am spent and feel others will have to carry the load, not me.

CATALYST/NOVEMBER 1991

33
ROBIN, observer

May 11  Yesterday I attended a PPAC meeting at School B. They were reviewing their school improvement plan and the budget, and concluded they need to have a contingency plan in case (as most believe is likely) the Board of Education decides to cut “extras” like the art teacher, who will then have to be paid out of Chapter 1 funds. The anxiety level is fairly high about the expected cuts, and along with that goes the usual cynicism about Pershing Road.

The next agenda item was teacher-members of the local school council for next year. One of the current members (who has served as LSC secretary) spoke strongly about how important the job is, and how demanding. She hoped people would consider running. Someone proposed, “We’re so pleased with the present members that we want them to continue,” in a tone that meant, “Don’t ask me to do it.” I think teachers are taking the LSC more seriously at this school since the episode with the dual language immersion proposal, when the LSC took them seriously (see CATALYST, June 1991, pages 38-41); but, as with parents, only a few are prepared to actually put much time into it.

The other major agenda item was restructuring the school day. They’d heard about other schools that arranged to have children start at 8:50 four days a week to gain 40 minutes a week in instructional time so it could be devoted to staff development: 40 minutes a week could be used in various ways—either each week or 80 minutes every other week or 160 minutes once a month.

Most people (about a dozen were present out of a staff of 30+) seemed to favor the idea; but some were concerned that the time might be controlled by the principal, and it would be “just another meeting.” Someone said, “We need to figure out what we’re going to do with the time before we decide”; but another teacher replied, “We should go ahead and make the change and see what happens.” “This is our time, remember,” another pointed out, which led to the turmoil about whether it could be used for “paper work” and, if that turned out not to be the case, who would decide how it should in fact be used. The consensus seemed to be that grade-level groups would decide. The problem remains, however, that the time won’t be productive unless teachers have some good ideas about how to use it.

This discussion struck me as part of the beginning of what I hope will be a continuing process of exchange and support among the faculty. Everyone complains that teachers’ professionalism is limited by their isolation from colleagues with whom they should be sharing their expertise; this very minor restructuring referred to above will provide occasion to remedy that complaint.

But a serious obstacle is the prevailing school culture, which permits or even encourages the isolation. In most schools, teaching is understood to be an intensely individual activity. Teachers are sometimes jealous of their favorite classroom practices and not inclined to share them, or they are fearful of being seen as claiming to be “better” than their peers if they are too conspicuous about their successes. At the same time, confessing puzzlement about a classroom problem is seen as a dangerous exposure of weakness. Years of functioning in such an environment means that many teachers find it difficult to even imagine what they could productively accomplish in a more collaborative setting.

I think this is what I was hearing at the PPAC meeting. It will be fascinating to see how this plays out. Sometimes very small changes can have far-reaching cultural implications; reformers can hope this will happen here.

LAZARUS, teacher

June 26  The second of two Chicago Teachers Union meetings to discuss what the union can do to promote educational change. Those gathered around the table are the nurseries of reform. They have not necessarily been its creators, but they have nurtured the best it has to offer. These are the teachers who took the lead and added to their already overburdened schedules as union delegates the challenge of serv...
ing as the first wave of teacher reps on the local school coun-
cils. (Not surprisingly, one had to leave the conference early
that day to attend an LSC meeting at his school.) They have
been the professional witnesses of the process educating not
only the children at their schools but also the parents and
community—and, not infrequently, the administration as well.
A battle-weary group, many are ready to step back and let
others run for election the next time around. Yet, as evidenced
by their exchanges, they are eager to share their experience.
They suggest a concerted effort be made to use the union
structure to continue providing reliable information to the
membership.

During the session, a review is presented of innovative
union programs, some jointly sponsored by the board: an
internship program for provisional teachers to help fill the
ranks as experienced teachers retire, a model for PPAC deci-
sion making, an information package for new LSC elections, a
Restructuring Academy for Teachers (grant proposal), training
in the use of the Urban Teacher Selection Interview Process.
Participants, eager for opportunities for professional growth,
recommend creating informational videos, writing newsletters
and setting up local educational conferences for teachers.

I began to experience a sense of renewal I did not think
possible after his excruciatingly long year of setback after
setback. The conference ends on a note of expectancy, of a
 task beginning rather than ending.

Professional enrichment

LAZARUS, teacher

April 4 The third of the CTU/university-sponsored lectures
was a presentation by John Goodlad, who recently authored
Teachers for Our Nation’s Schools. He focused on the prob-
lems of schools of education rather than on the problems of
practicing teachers, thus providing for his teacher audience
no practical suggestions about classroom problems.

About universities, Goodlad observed that unlike technical
programs such as engineering, teacher education programs
do not recruit, nor do they have a recognizable socialization
process. In departments of education, the reward system is
skewed toward those who do research, not those who do the
hands-on work needed in the classroom. It is clear that the
work of the university is not carefully linked to the schools pro-
viding the education for most of America’s youth.

Goodlad’s remarks perhaps prompted some serious reflec-
tion among his listeners; but in the end, the physician wrung
his hands in frustration as the patient stood at death’s door.
The sight was not comforting.

May 9 The last in the series of CTU/university lectures this
season: Linda Darling-Hammond, from Columbia University.
The speaker’s presentation was as bright and revitalizing as
the perky pink roses on her dress. We are given a feast of
ideas not just at the hypothetical level but at the practical
level as well. We are encouraged to reduce the gap between
school and community. Pull away from bureaucratization,
which fragments services to children and runs counter to the
goals of education. Move away from testing toward perform-
ance-based criteria. Restructure the school schedule. Allow
time for teacher collaboration. Develop the inquiry ethic and
use continual diagnosis. One school, for instance, does child
case studies every other Monday and curriculum revision on
alternate Mondays. Involve students in service to community
and school. Use more experiential learning. We need an infu-
sion of knowledge on different practices.

Teachers have been starved; they need to share with other
teachers what they do in the classroom. For example, a New
York City school for dropouts from 36 high schools is using,
among other evaluation measures, a portfolio, which includes
a record of community service and applied learning in a vari-
ety of other areas.

Darling-Hammond highlighted three issues or problems
that arise in any reform effort. (1) How view students? She
urged a focus on children as learners from a developmental
rather than a deficit mode. See diversity as strength; do not
pigeonhole students. (2) Teachers? Teacher professionalism
must be central in restructuring. This emphasis is necessary to
overcome societal ambivalence that makes it possible for the
least well-prepared teachers to be assigned to schools with
the greatest needs. There is only a one-in-four chance of get-
ting a certified math/science teacher in a class. (3) Equity.
Equal access should build the capacity of schools and teach-
ers. “Choice” merely expands the gap between the haves
and the have-nots. We have a mandate for deeper commit-
ment for professional development. We must be responsible
in the use of power. If a few schools turn out to be a debacle,
reversion will occur. We need to build “capacity.” We need
to find our own forms of accountability that do not give way
easily to self-interest.

As one practical starting point, the speaker suggested an
infusion of ideas through observations at other schools. And
she stressed the importance of an administrator who would
pick up on energy that some teachers have, anxious to try
new ideas. If parents/teachers start something new, they may
need do no more than bring the principal along. Central
office should provide technical support.

CATALYST/NOVEMBER 1991

35
End-of-school-year reflections

CARLOS, teacher

June 30 Many staff members whose hearts and pride were not with the school are finally realizing that the children come first and academic excellence is possible. The same goes for the LSC members who at first felt that being a member was a political stepping stone rather than a public service.

ELIZABETH, teacher

July 6 In September I will return to my school rested and renewed—for my students. These past two years on the LSC has left a bad taste in my mouth, but it hasn’t affected my devotion to my students. I will begin anew with boundless energy in September to teach my kids, and teach them well—in spite of, not because of, Chicago school reform.

RAYMOND, community

Sept. 1 Most LSC members are basically honest parents and community residents interested in the education and safety of our children.

We did not expect—most of us—that we had to play hardball politics in order to get what we want. Now, by the end of our terms, we all realize that politics is infused in public education. Many of us are alarmed by the ugliness of the political system. Some of us are demoralized by the selfishness and narrow-minded indifference to our children’s lives.

The majority of us wish that the larger world of politics would merely give us the resources to manage our schools and leave us alone.

A small minority of LSC leaders recognize that our good intentions alone will not save our children, schools and communities from the tremendous problems we have to confront.

We have dedicated ourselves to gaining the leadership skills and organizational capacity to affect public education policy so that next year’s legislative session will not catch us sleeping (politically naïve) while our children are thrown to the wolves.

More and more LSC members have come to recognize that there is power in organized numbers with a plan.

Everyone in the education field knows that effective schools with high-achieving students are a function of motivated teachers, reduced class size, extended time on tasks and supportive parent/community involvement. We are attempting to do it all with only the latter ingredient: parent/community involvement—it does not cost public money.

This cannot continue. Is there a conspiracy to dismantle school reform and improvement efforts of parent/community involvement by refusing to provide local schools the resources they need in order to realize local goals?

LAZARUS, teacher

May 8 At the end of our school year, we again face cuts in staff. Not of the newly arrived, but of seasoned teachers. One, distraught and in anguish, says that no one should have to worry about their position at this age. Yet, in business and industry this very thing is happening. What does it say about our society? The “bottom line” leaves little room for the human dimension.

May 25 It is not reform that has failed but the state Legislature’s unwillingness to fund it properly and the Board of Education’s cost cuts that have taken the heart out of the system. The first strike in our nation’s history was not for higher wages but to prevent management from lowering wages. History may be repeating itself soon.

June 8 In the last few years in America, especially as the proportion of elderly in the population has become greater, the knotty question has arisen about the care of the terminally ill. The family, in consultation with other care providers, must make the agonizing judgment about options. Sometimes the judgment tells the hospital personnel that no heroic measures are to be taken in a crisis. In short, do not resuscitate. Are we at that point with our schools? Is it too late?

AMELIA, parent

Aug. 28 How can councils be more effective? A change of attitude regarding their own power is a basic necessity. There has been too much asking of permission from the board and waiting for them to say No, No, No. It is much harder for the board to learn about and stop a successful innovation underway if we go ahead and assume rights to act for our schools—just the way the board assumes rights to dictate to us. The law is not clear. The whole mentality of the schools must change from one of fear of repercussions from the bureaucracy to one of self-reliant local control. It needs to be a little like what must be going on right now in the Soviet Union—a whole rethinking of what is possible at the local level.
October LSC elections

LOU, community

July 20  We have a lot of unanswered questions about the coming October LSC elections. Who is doing training for new candidates? Will there be money for recruiting and training candidates for get-out-the-vote campaigns locally?

Everyone is waiting to see what the Legislature will do to the process. We seem to be always under the gun: hurry up and get this big job done yesterday. Don't they know that democratic process takes time? Maybe "they" just want to be sure we can't do a good job. We still frequently hear comments about a strategy of planned failure for school reform that will empower the voucher supporters to get their way in the Legislature. We really need a long-term trial for these new LSCs—five to ten years minimum.

Perhaps the biggest question is: Will the incumbent LSC members run again? And if so, which ones? The hard-working people who have chaired committees, worked out school improvement plans and Chapter 1 budgets? Or the "go-alongs" who attend some of the council meetings but do little between regular meetings?

There are three councils in our neighborhood. In each one the person who has taken the most active and responsible part seems determined not to run again. It will be a real loss if the working members are unwilling to continue.

ROBIN, observer

Aug. 27  At School A, the two teacher LSC reps are not going to run again, partly because they are worn out by all the meetings and partly because they feel it's important for other teachers to have the kind of contacts with the community that are involved in being on the LSC.

A couple of other members have indicated they won't run again, and the rest aren't saying. The $10,000 Illinois Bell/Americable award has made them feel their efforts were worthwhile; it may make a difference in their willingness to run again, especially to the community member who insisted the LSC apply for it.

Sept. 7  I asked the principal of School B how things are going, and she said, "Much better than last year. It's easier the second time around." She was hired by the LSC last year and had a struggle getting a significant number of the teachers to accept an approach to education that assumed children would learn.

She said she hasn't had time to worry much about the October elections lately, but she is concerned about the prospect of an entirely new council that might take a completely different approach from the old one, meaning that the direction of the school would have to change to suit the new council. We agreed that it would have been helpful if the reform law had provided staggered terms for LSC members. It may be tough to get continuity not just in programs but in management without some old-timers to help out and orient new members.

RAYMOND, community

Sept. 1  At our school, most eligible council members are likely to run again. But at many other schools there is a reluctance or a definite no to running. From my conversations with these people, I detect a half dozen reasons: demoralization, too much pressure, too much time required, impact of LSC not significant, lack of personal recognition, lack of public commitment to the schools and the children.

LAZARUS, teacher

Sept. 4  October council elections come up in conversation. The core of parents and community residents on the present council will form a slate. They wish to finish the job they set out to do: improving the school.

ELIZABETH, teacher

Sept. 14  There is ample uncertainty this fall for teachers, but I do have one certainty in my school life: I am not running for re-election to my LSC on October 9. That's definite. I love my school. I love my classes. But . . .

I don't know who is running again. I don't care. I will no longer be a part of it. Our children are our future—not our LSCs.

PUD, student

Sept. 23  The hot issue is the new LSC election. It seems as if too many people aren't interested in being re-elected, at least at my school. I haven't even turned in my own nomination application for re-election.
School reform is not a new issue: Rousseau, the 18th-century philosopher; Horace Mann, the early 19th-century educator; John Dewey, father of the progressive school movement in this century; and others from the distant past both discussed and tried it. Yet, as the 20th century comes to an end, school reform is a hot topic in the United States.

School reform is not new to Chicago either. Lane Technical High School, for example, was among the first schools to combine vocational and academic education. But through a series of events in the late 1980s, school reform here earned capitalization: School Reform in Chicago.

Two new books, one by journalist Mary O'Connell and the other by researcher G. Alfred Hess Jr., offer descriptions of the process that led to capital-L Reform.

Like their titles, the O'Connell and Hess books have much in common. Both authors stress that they are describing only the very early stages of school reform—1987 through 1990—and that it is much too early to consider its effectiveness in terms of student academic performance and retention in school. Both volumes are, to a great extent, based on the views of participants in the reform process—O'Connell's on those of 40 activists and Hess' primarily on those of one, the author.

Both books cite some of the work done earlier in the 1980s by civic groups to document the sorry state of the Chicago Public Schools. (Much of this work, incidentally, was done by Hess and organizations with which he was associated. Indeed, in the Hess book, his personal role in the Chicago reform activities and the role of the the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, which he heads, receive a great deal of attention.)

Both books also describe the early efforts of Mayor Harold Washington to form a coalition of business, community and school leaders to create a program modeled on the Boston Compact, with businesses guaranteeing employment for public school graduates in return for schools assuring that graduates attain a certain level of quality. And both describe the specific events leading up to the Legislature's passage of the Chicago School Reform Act, covering the breakdown of the Compact discussion, a sort of last-straw teachers strike (which aroused the anger of both parents and the business community), the death of Mayor Washington and the work of the Education Summit he had assembled from a wide variety of school constituencies.

O'Connell captures spirit

At only 40 pages, O'Connell's book is a brisk local history. Hess' more expansive treatment also weaves in relevant educational research (e.g., on "effective schools"), national reform trends (e.g., accountability and teacher professionalism) and reform approaches in other cities (e.g., decentralization in New York City). Hess also provides a great deal of statistical information to document the failures of the Chicago Public Schools.

Unlike Hess' rather academic approach, O'Connell stresses the dynamics of citizen participation in reform activities, particularly the interactions among groups that had never really interacted before—community

John E. Corbally, a past president of the University of Illinois and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, was co-chair of Mayor Harold Washington's Education Summit.
organizers and business executives, for example. The reform efforts creat-
ed a spirit that, if maintained, can be much more significant than the details
of reform legislation, and it is this spir-
it that pervades O'Connell's work. Her
list of conclusions and lessons and her
summary of the reform legislation,
drawn from work of Designs for
Change, another high-caliber Chicago
organization working for better
schools, are excellent and useful
materials. Together, the two books provide
a theoretical and practical summary of
Chicago's current school reform
efforts.

Now for a confession. This reviewer
also was a participant in school reform
activities of the late 1980s; so my
reading of these two volumes must con-
tend with my own biases and observa-
tions. For example, I find it difficult for
anyone to write a "case study of the
third-largest urban school system in the
United States and the reform move-
ment that was mobilized to address its
problems" (Hess, p. xi) without men-
tioning people such as James Deanes,
leader of the Parent/Community
Council, or the Rev. Kenneth B. Smith,
co-chair of the Education Summit, or
without providing more than a casual
mention of mayoral policy chief Hal
Baron, who guided the summit through
perilous times.

I find it difficult to believe that some-
one who participated in the Education
Summit could have described, as Hess
does, the Chicago Teachers Union as
a positive force for change; the union
leadership did a fine job of sitting and
smiling and giving very little when the
chips were down. And I find it difficult
to believe that someone from one of the
"establishment education better-
ment groups" (e.g., the Chicago Panel)
could have ignored the mistrust and
suspicion held by the "people" about
such groups—and the degree to which
that mistrust and suspicion are still fac-
tors as the reform effort continues.

As I read Hess' book, I often found
myself wondering what set of events
Hess was describing. But as I read
O'Connell's, I found myself reliving the
days of the summit. For example,
O'Connell's interview with B. Kenneth
West, a prominent banker and civic
leader, and the resulting worce picture
of West and community activist Coretta
McFerren hugging and crying while
working in Springfield on behalf of the
children of Chicago capture the
essence of school reform, Chicago
style. That style rarely comes through
in Hess' book.

As the head of a school watchdog
group, Hess has tried for so long and
with so little success to work with the
public school bureaucracy that he
seems to find villains from that organi-
zation too easily. I understand the ten-
dency but find it skews the story from
time to time. For example, although
former Supt. Manford Byrd Jr. did not
present his case too well during the
final days of the Compact talks, he did
not, as Hess states, require "$83 mil-
lion in additional revenue as a condi-
tion of any serious effort at reform." Byrd
was simply trying to make clear that
real reform would require some
real new revenues in addition to any
savings that might be achieved
through streamlining the bureaucracy.
Further, there are some legitimate ques-
tions about whether a model of the
Boston Compact would have constitu-
ed a "serious effort at reform."

In general, my difficulty with the
Hess book is that it seems to suggest
that the reform effort was orchestrated
by Fred and his friends when, in fact,
there was little orchestration and many
conductors. Combining Hess' discus-
sion of the background of reform with
O'Connell's overview of the process
would make an excellent first volume
of what likely will become a many-vol-
ume history of this latest effort at
school reform in Chicago. One should
take the time to read, to profit from
and to enjoy both books.

CATALYST/NOVEMBER 1991

39
Lack of student discipline is one of the major problems facing Chicago's elementary school teachers, according to a survey conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CATALYST October 1991).

Fifty-five percent of the 13,000 teachers who responded to the survey reported that student misbehavior interferes with their teaching. In contrast, two other problems—lack of parent support and lack of necessary basic supplies—were cited by, respectively, 49 percent and 30 percent.

Below, CATALYST looks at two school discipline programs.

Beaubien accentuates the positive

In late 1989, teachers at Beaubien Elementary School, 5025 N. Laramie, began to feel discipline problems were hindering their teaching.

"I spent a lot of time telling students to sit down, be quiet and do their work," says seventh-grade teacher Mary Schertler.

"Teachers were using traditional discipline practices that didn't work and weren't producing the kind of [learning] environment we wanted," recalls Principal Thomas Plain. "They felt they needed a uniform plan, not a haphazard, negative approach such as having children do extra math problems or write 'I will not talk in class' 100 times.

Now, Beaubien has a new program that encourages positive behavior through on-the-spot rewards and punishment. Already it is paying off. Suspensions dropped from 93 in 1989-90 to 30 in 1990-91. And students behave well not only in class, but also on the playground, in the lunchroom and in the library.

The approach, called assertive discipline, encourages self-discipline and was developed by California motivational speaker Lee Canter.

"We wanted order, but we also wanted a certain amount of freedom, and we wanted the kids to buy into the discipline themselves," Plain explains.

Staff were immediately sold on the program after a new teacher arranged for a presentation by colleagues from her former suburban school, which uses assertive discipline.

What won teachers over was the systematic, positive approach. "Children know up front what's expected of them, what will happen if they don't live up to it, and what [rewards] they'll get for following the rules," explains Bob Finn, assistant principal. "It emphasizes positive behavior, not negative reinforcement and punishment."

Schertler and another teacher attended a week-long summer training course at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Ill., taught by Lee Canter and Associates. Just before the start of the 1990-91 school year, they conducted two workshops for other staff and for parents.

The training course and accompanying videos cost about $790, paid for with money raised by the LSC.

Now, Schertler says, "we as teachers have changed our behavior." Instead of constantly telling students to sit down or be quiet, "we keep our comments to a minimum."

Immediate reinforcement is the key. For example, when a staff member sees a student behaving well, perhaps by walking quietly through the halls or lining up quietly in the lunchroom, the student is given a gold slip of paper with his name on it.

The student gives the slip to his teacher, who holds onto it for a drawing held during a school assembly. The more gold slips a student has, the more chances he has to win prizes, donated by the LSC and local businesses.

Classroom discipline works similarly. Each teacher posts a chart listing classroom rules, rewards for obeying them and consequences for breaking them. Students who follow the rules are given gold slips.
But if a student talks instead of doing work, a teacher won’t tell the student to stop; instead, the teacher just writes the student’s name on the board. A second offense brings a check mark, and the student is sent to sit alone in a corner to do classwork. A third offense brings a call to parents, and a fourth means a trip to the principal’s office. Students then must call their parents to tell them why they’ve been sent to the office.

If a student persists in misbehaving, he or she is issued a “traffic ticket” to take home. If the behavior is particularly bad, the ticket is mailed to parents to make sure they see it. The tickets carry “fines” of detentions, parent-teacher conferences or other action. Cases usually don’t get that far, Scherlter says.

Kids themselves say the program keeps them from “acting out.”

“The teacher used to get after me about 10 or 20 times in class,” says Marshon Kuntu, 13. “We’d pass notes in class. Now, she’ll read [the note] in class or take it to our mothers. I don’t get in trouble anymore.”

“I used to talk a lot in class,” says Roxanne Diaz, 14. “Now when [the teacher] writes down my name I stop, because I don’t want to get into any more trouble. If my mother found out, I’d be grounded.”

For more information, contact Cynthia Dougao or Mary Scherlter at (312) 534-3500.

‘Discipline’ program a hit with kids

In one class at Brenan Elementary School, 11411 S. Eggleston, students were so unruly they drove away five substitutes before a permanent teacher could be found.

“Kids used to stand up on the tables and scream, and they’d be throwing chairs at people,” recalling Manuela Pizarro, 9.

Such disturbances have subsided since the school hired a second counselor and expanded its special counseling program for troubled youngsters. For the 1989-90 school year, discipline referrals dropped 60 percent “it’s not just a discipline-orientated program, but that’s where we have seen dramatic results,” says counselor Yvonne Alderson. Further, children often come for help in solving disputes before lights start.

Indeed, students look forward to the start of the program each year. “They come up to me saying, ‘When are you going to start? Can I be in your program?’” reports Alderson.

Principal George Scripp attributes the misbehavior to growing up in a violent environment: Brenan’s 980 students live in the Roseland community, where shootings, gang activity and drug dealing are commonplace.

Alderson says problems also stem from frequent disruptions in a student’s home life. Many of the children are from foster homes or are shipped from relative to relative, and the constant upheaval “carries over into school. They won’t make friends or trust their teachers.”

Observe first-grade teacher Nancy Rice: “The program gives kids a chance to verbalize what they are going through [emotionally and socially] rather than act it out.”

Here’s how it works:

Teachers refer students with behavior and other problems to Alderson, who handles counseling for grades six through eight, or to new counselor Ermaene Jones, who handles kindergaten through fifth grade. About $50,000 in Chapter 1 money pays Jones’ salary.

Students are grouped by age, with

Continued on page 48
Finance Authority takes harder line on reform plan

by Michael Klonsky

Following two years of hand-holding as the Board of Education struggled to develop a systemwide reform plan, the Chicago School Finance Authority issued a strong rebuke last August. The board’s $5.7 billion, three-year “grand design” for leading schools to the promised land of reform was completely unacceptable, the Authority said, sending the board back to the drawing table. (A revised plan was due Oct. 15.) The Authority faulted the board for failing to relinquish authority to schools and for failing to live within budgetary restraints.

Echoing some school reform leaders, Finance Authority member Maxwell Griffin Jr. even questioned whether it was possible for “a centralized body to decentralize itself.”

Designs for Change, which has sent the Authority lengthy critiques of board plans, already had concluded it was not. In a letter to chairman Phillip D. Block III, Designs’ executive director, Donald R. Moore, proposed opening up the process. Specifically, Moore urged the Authority to:

- Select experts in key areas to redraft sections of the plan.
- Hold public meetings to gather the thoughts of local school council (LSC) members, school-level educators, recognized experts on particular topics, Board of Education members, central staff and representatives of interested independent groups.
- Create a committee from these constituencies to write a draft of a new plan.
- Provide time for independent groups to comment.
- Take a vote on accepting the plan in whole or in part.

Block did not return CATALYST phone calls for this article. In the past he has not been receptive to reformers’ pleas. For example, last year he told the Consortium on Chicago School Research that efforts by reform groups to enter the process were “not very helpful” and that if their advice is not taken, “so be it.” Block said that the Finance Authority doesn’t want to be the arbiter between the School Board and reform groups. In letters to Block, Moore repeatedly has accused the Authority of acting like a “private club.”

Under the Chicago School Reform Act, the Finance Authority is responsible for ensuring that the School Board writes and carries out a systemwide reform plan to meet the goals set forth by the act. Key among them is restructing the relationship between the board and local schools to one of “less centralized control.”

The act also directs the Finance Authority to approve the plan only if “it is reasonably capable of being achieved” and is “supported by demonstrably sufficient and available funding.” The reform law gives the Authority a wide range of powers, including the power to rewrite the plan itself.

The School Board had called its Systemwide Educational Reform Goals and Objectives Plan 1991-1994 “more than a response to the dictates of the law…It is a grand design for rebuilding public education” and bringing schools up to the national norms. Indeed, the board criticized its own previous plan (for 1990-93) as having been “tired, limited and inadequate” because it strove to live within available revenues.

The latest version certainly was not timid and purposefully paid scant attention to financial constraints. The board described the question of resources as “a challenge that has to be addressed later.”

From elaborate plans for a million-dollar television studio, complete with “earth station” at Pershing Road, to staff training and expanded preschool and summer programs, the systemwide plan projected a multitude of often positive and badly needed activities.
But with the board having to cut spending to balance its budget and possibly having to cut still deeper to pay for employee raises, its latest reform plan had no chance of being implemented. Authority consultant Fenwick English, an education professor at the University of Cincinnati, called it “a let’s pretend plan.”

Just as alarming, say board critics, is the plan’s resistance to shifting resources and authority to the local schools, which is considered by many to be the heart and soul of reform.

That case is stated in a critique the Finance Authority sought from Chester E. “Checker” Finn, a professor at Vanderbilt University who previously served as a top aide to former U.S. Education Sec. William Bennett. Finn accused Supt. Ted Kimbrough and the board of viewing school reform as a very large “add-on” program rather than a fundamental restructuring of Chicago’s schools.

In his memorandum to the Authority, Finn charged: “Far from being the ‘grand design for rebuilding public education’ ... this plan appears to assume that business-as-usual will go on in the amount of approximately $2.58 billion in fiscal 1992 and then—should an additional $591 million fall from a tree some-

where—a set of activities labeled ‘reform’ will also be undertaken.”

Finn went on to say that virtually all of the changes contemplated by the board are “top down, centrally directed, systemwide, uniform and bureaucratic in their fundamental nature.” While not opposing all the specifics in the plan, Finn pointed out that it could well have been written for Detroit, Philadelphia or Houston, “where it is assumed that the central board and superintendent should make nearly all the important decisions.”

As an example of board encroachment on local authority, Finn cited a goal calling for 90 percent of the principals to be retained when their contracts expire in 1994 and 1995.

“Why is it the business of the General Superintendent and Central Board to set a 90 percent target..when the authority to replace the principal is perhaps the most significant form of leverage that local school councils possess?” Finn asked.

Critics also questioned the board’s proposed $7.5 million Institute of School Reform, which would be under the “direction of the General Superintendent.” The central office should instead offer local school councils a menu of ideas and expertise from a wide variety of sources, they say.

Finance Authority facts

■ DUTIES: Ensures that the School Board follows sound financial practices. Verifies each year that the board’s budget is balanced. Schools cannot open until this is done. Ensures that the board writes and carries out a systemwide reform plan that, in its judgment, meets the requirements of the Chicago School Reform Act.

■ MEMBERS: Five appointed jointly by the mayor of Chicago and the governor. Current members are Chairman Philip D. Block III, vice president of Capital Guardian Trust Company, an investment management firm; Maxwell Griffin Jr., a partner in the law firm of Hinshaw & Culbertson; David B. Heller, president of Advisory Research Inc. , an investment advisory firm; Joyce E. Moran, senior counsel and assistant secretary of Sears, Roebuck and Co.; and Deborah S. Pardini, a partner in the law firm of Ross & Hardies. All are Chicago residents.

■ BUDGET: $1 million, mainly for legal, financial and educational consultants.

■ HISTORY: Created by the Legislature in 1980 to rescue the school system from a financial collapse. An independent governmental body with its own taxing power, the Authority issued hundreds of millions of dollars in bonds to pay off the board’s debt and keep schools open.

In 1989, the Legislature designated the Authority as the official watchdog of the board’s reform activities. Injecting the Authority into educational matters was a compromise between business leaders and others who were distrustful of the School Board’s commitment to reform and leaders in the black community who objected to a proposed “super board” that could overrule the Board of Education.

The Authority repeatedly has drawn fire from community groups and others who accuse it of forcing the board to make budget cuts that are damaging to children. For example, the School Board and reformers wanted the Authority to permit the board this year to dip into reserves being held for bills coming due in the future. The Authority said no.” Linda Lenz
What board wanted to do

Here are some proposals from the systemwide reform plan proposed by the Board of Education but rejected by the Chicago School Finance Authority.

- Extend the school day by an hour in all elementary schools and designate one of those hours for local staff development activities. Cost: $126.3 million.
- Remodel Pershing Road headquarters and spread some functions among regional service centers. Cost: $35 million.
- Provide preschool programs to all three- and four-year-olds "at risk" of educational failure. Cost: An additional $18.4 million.
- Increase the length of class periods in high schools to 50 minutes and schedule six periods per day. The objective is to reduce the number of study halls students take to meet the state requirement of 300 minutes of daily educational activity. Savings: $17.5 million.

(Studies have shown that students sign up for as many as three study halls to meet the requirement. Switching to 50-minute periods is now a local option requiring teacher and LSC approval.)
- Increase the number of year-round schools to help ease overcrowding. Cost: $10 million.
- Create an Institute of School Reform at Pershing Road. Cost: $7.5 million.
- Pay teachers to tutor failing elementary school students. Cost: $290,530.

M.K.

In testimony before the board and Finance Authority, Margaret Morrison of Leadership for Quality Education charged that the plan "shows a lack of faith" in the LSCs by failing to shift authority and resources away from the board's Pershing Road headquarters to the local schools.

She also was critical of the board's failure to establish priorities as required by the reform act. "With the current shortfall and looming cuts, it is imperative that the board... provide a framework for the hard decisions which will need to be made and to show the community that current resources are being used in the most effective manner."

As an example, Morrison pointed to a $35 million proposal to rehabilitate, move and remodel offices at Pershing Road. "This remodeling job," she said, "should be less a priority than maintenance and repair at schools."

Representatives of the central administration declined to be interviewed for this story. In August, Kimbrough told critics of the plan that there was an inherent tension between showing leadership and relinquishing power to the LSCs. "We have tried to walk the delicate line between being directive and being suggestive (of reforms)," he said.

School Board President Clinton Bristow objected to board judgments being supplanted by those of Finance Authority consultants. "The law is very clear that there should not be a substitution of judgment," he said.

One reform leader, James Deanes of the Parent/Community Council, argues that the Finance Authority should not be involved in education planning at all. "Authority should be in the hands of the local schools, parents and community," he says. "That is the whole idea of school reform. The Finance Authority has outlived its purpose and has simply become one more bureaucratic group we have to deal with."

While no fan of the School Board or Kimbrough, Deanes criticizes the critics who would force schools to live with what he considers inadequate resources to meet the needs of children. Without discussing the pros or cons of particular points in the board's plan, Deanes favors adopting a plan even if it is destined to run out of money in November. Then he would challenge the Legislature to respond.

Michael Klonsky is a Chicago writer.

Last-minute cuts create classroom chaos

by Maribeth Vander Weele

When the Chicago Board of Education closed schools and cut more than 500 teaching jobs in its budget-cutting blitz, it triggered a chain reaction that displaced hundreds of other teachers—many to classes outside their expertise.

Since teachers with full state certificates are guaranteed employment under union rules, the cuts made Aug. 31 sent the central administration scrambling to match all those teachers with jobs in the first week of school. Teachers not permanently appointed—many because they lacked the necessary courses for a full certificate—were bumped into a lower-paid classification of floating substitute.

The result? For DuSable High School, it meant a teacher trained to teach poorly performing students has, without warning, become a floating substitute. For Calumet High School, it meant hurriedly closing the print shop program after graphic arts teacher Percy Brown was replaced by an art teacher with no experience in the field. Brown, who has a
master’s degree and other training, lost a third of his pay.

At Sayre Language Academy, it meant replacing a fourth-grade teacher with an eighth-grade science teacher who has never taught intermediate classes. The teacher bumped out of fourth grade is a single mother who, with no notice, lost medical benefits for her family, Principal Eileen M. Gallagher said. It is probably too late for her to find a new job this year.

“It’s not really fair to anybody,” said one high school business teacher who was transferred and assigned to teach math, then music and now math again. “It’s unsettled to the students,” he said, asking that his name not be used. “They don’t know who their teacher is from day to day.” With expertise in courses such as accounting, business law, bookkeeping and typing, he has neither taught nor had special training in math or music.

Guaranteed jobs

Days before school began, the board cut about 520 teaching jobs and 81 assistant principal and 11 teacher-librarian jobs, said Margaret M. Harrigan, associate superintendent of human resources. All the people in those positions are guaranteed jobs.

The appointments hurriedly made by her department could be construed as temporary—principals [could] replace the teachers before Sept. 27, as long as the replacement has a full certificate, she said. And she noted the 500 displaced teachers—called supernumeraries—represent a small percentage of the teaching work force of about 26,000.

“This isn’t a welcome situation for either the principals or the teachers, but they’re accepting it professionally,” she said.

Her department is caught between conflicting rules—one that guarantees jobs to certified teachers and the other giving principals control over staff.

“It’s a gigantic problem,” said Robert A. Sampieri, the board’s chief operating officer. “We have to keep them by law, but we don’t have an appropriate place for them. That has got to be a major economic detriment to the solvency of this district.”

The Chicago Teachers Union was the force behind guaranteeing jobs for displaced teachers. “None of these individuals are poor teachers,” said David M. Peterson, the CTU’s assistant to the president for legislation. “You’re talking about qualified personnel who have, in many instances, worked for our system 20 or 25 years.”

But others, such as school reformer Ron Sistrunk, said the contract and the law should be rewritten. “The kids are the ultimate losers in the supernumerary game,” said Sistrunk, chairman of the local school council of King High School, where a home economics teacher has been assigned to science classes.

Teachers are placed in areas covered by their state certificate, Sampieri said, although he acknowledged that may not necessarily be their area of expertise. “That’s why you’re a professional,” said Sampieri, a one-time music teacher. “You’re supposed to be able to handle that difference.”

Under the three-year contract signed last year, teachers are awarded bonuses for going back to school, on the theory they would broaden themselves, Sampieri said. Instead, many furthered their expertise in the area they teach. “That’s one of the weaknesses of the bonus,” he said.

The situation poses a problem for principals who, under school reform, are guaranteed the right to choose their staffs. “The element of choice is very, very important because, as principals, we know what kinds of people we need to make these types of programs successful,” said DuSable Principal Charles E. Mingo.

“They should not have waited to the last minute to close those schools and other positions,” Gallagher added. “That should have been done in June.”

The last-minute changes gave teachers little time to prepare themselves academically, look for new jobs or revise their personal budgets. “If I knew about it over this summer,” said the business teacher now assigned to teach math, “I would have taken a class of two.”

Maribeth Vander Wee is an education writer for the Chicago Sun-Times. Reprinted with permission from the Chicago Sun-Times.
'91 council elections: 
How they went at one school, 
Phillips High

by Sally O'Dowd and Scott Schraff

It was still dark outside and quiet inside sprawling Wendell Phillips High School when, at 6:30 a.m. on Oct. 9, the first parent voted in the election of local school council members at the South Side school.

Sandalo Jackson, father of a Phillips freshman, said he was voting out of respect for the school and its history. "The high school has a tradition for producing some of the leaders of our community," said Jackson, adding that it opens its doors throughout the school year and during the summer for community activities.

Phillips, 244 E. Pershing, was opened in 1904 to serve the children of a growing population of blacks migrating from the South. Alumni include singer Nat "King" Cole, actress Maria Gibbs and Archibald Carey, one of Chicago's first black judges.

Most community candidates

This year, Phillips led all of the city's high schools in the number of community residents who filed to run for the local school council. Thirteen residents campaigned for two seats; by election day, though, two had dropped out. As at other city schools, the number of candidates at Phillips was half what it was in 1989, when the first LSC elections were held amid much anticipation and publicity.

Phillips' history, its energetic new principal, Juanita Tucker, and its appearance on an early "hit list" of possible school closings were cited as reasons for the good candidate showing. "The community wants to keep the school open and show support for Mrs. Tucker and the faculty here," said a new faculty member, who asked not to be identified.

"Phillips High is a community...It means everything to the surrounding area," said Pat Denning, an English teacher who has been at Phillips since 1975. "This [school] is the arts center and the ball park. It's where the community comes."

Since the arrival of Tucker, revisions in the curriculum and the reports of Phillips' possible demise, more students have been coming, too. Enrollment at the block-long school is down 50 percent from 10 years ago but up 18 percent from last year, school officials said. It now stands at 1,367.

The LSC's likely new student representative claims a slice of credit for the turn-around. James Steele, who won the most votes in the student advisory election, said he encouraged seven friends who had dropped out to come back to school. "So far, they're hanging in there," said Steele. [Officially, the Board of Education appoints student members to high school LSCs and teacher members to all LSCs, following advisory polls.]

On election day, though, few voters showed up. Only 34 parents and 66 community residents voted. "It was unfortunate there was apathy among the parents," acknowledged John Rolence, the assistant principal. "The weather was nice. We're disappointed."

Lu Palmer, a member of the LSC, speculated, "The turnaround at Phillips from a bad school to a good school may have given some parents the feeling they weren't needed."

Added Rolence: "The LSC itself will produce [continued reform]."

Numbers down citywide

Citywide, voter turnout was roughly 60 percent of what it was in 1989. With 91 percent of schools reporting, turnout was 159,000, compared with about 245,000 two years ago. [Final results had not been tabulated by the time CATALYST went to press.]

Reports of voting problems and irregularities were down from the last election, too. Only 25 to 30 schools had "serious problems," said Arlene Rubin, executive director of Project LEAP (Legal Elections in All Precincts), a non-profit election watchdog group.

At Carver High School, for example, residents from outside the school's voting area were permitted to cast ballots, she said, contending State Rep. William Shaw and his brother, Ald. Robert Shaw, were among them. When a LEAP monitor arrived at 2 p.m., they "suddenly came up with boundaries," said Rubin.

There were fewer problems generally, said Rubin, because the elections were run better and there were fewer contested and "hot" elections.

Meanwhile, at Phillips the six incumbents who ran for reelection posted victories. With 100 votes, physics teacher Charles Stines was the top vote-getter. Annie Williams, an 18-year volunteer at the school who has rallied others to volunteer, was the top parent vote-getter. And Palmer placed first in the community contest.

Sally O'Dowd and Scott Schraff are graduate students at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University. They are assigned to the education beat.
FEWER LSC CANDIDATES
BUT BETTER THAN SUBURBS

This year, 8,173 candidates ran for 5,400 seats on local school councils, less than half the number that ran in 1989. That year, 17,256 people, spurred on by the enthusiasm of a brand-new reform law, sought seats.

However, this year’s LSC elections were still more competitive than suburban school board races were in 1989, according to the reform group Designs for Change. In Chicago, LSCs had 151 candidates for every 100 seats; in suburban Cook County, school boards had 143 candidates for every 100 seats.

At the average Chicago school, nine parents ran for six seats, three community residents ran for two seats, and three teachers ran for two seats. (The teacher contests were advisory; under revisions in the School Reform Act, the Board of Education will appoint two teachers to each council.)

Elementary and high schools with the most candidates were: Parents—McAuliffe Elementary, 1841 N. Springfield (23), and Lincoln Park High, 2001 N. Orchard (19); Community—Altgeld Elementary, 1340 W. 71st (14), and Phillips High, 244 E. Pershing (13); Teachers—Roster Elementary, 6936 S. Hermitage (7), and Wells Community Academy High School, 936 N. Ashland (6).

But 119 schools, scattered throughout the city, came up short. Those schools tended to lack enough community candidates, but some had an abundance of parent candidates. They included Burbank Elementary, 2035 N. Mobile (15 parents); Casals Elementary, 3501 W. Potomac (13 parents); and Skinner Elementary, 111 S. Throop (12 parents).

Nine schools lacked candidates in more than one category. Councils will appoint members to fill vacancies.

High schools generally had fewer candidates, but two bucked the trend: At Wells, 11 parents, 6 community residents, 6 teachers and 8 students ran; at Phillips, 9 parents, 13 community members, 6 teachers and 4 students ran. Controversy had put both schools in the news. At Wells, the issue was principal selection; at Phillips, the possibility of being closed.

NEW DEPUTY MAYOR
TARGETS NEW RESOURCES

Bringing city services to the schools is the goal of the city’s new deputy mayor for education, Leonard Dominguez.

Named in September, Dominguez is planning a citywide conference this fall for librarians from the city’s branch libraries and teachers, reading specialists and librarians from the city’s schools. The conference is aimed at ensuring schools take full advantage of the libraries and at encouraging professionals from both institutions to work together more closely, for example, by developing joint reading programs.

Dominguez also wants to increase corporate and foundation involvement in the schools. Specifically, he plans to promote adoption of groups of schools that want to pool their resources. As principal of Whitney Elementary School, 2815 S. Komensky, Dominguez helped put together a cluster of seven Little Village schools that now offers Saturday programs to parents, teachers and students.

"Many businesses still feel a little hesitant about the schools," he says. "I want them to feel good about what they’re doing so they don’t pull out of programs. We need to find more ways to promote these partnerships."

Dominguez, came to the post from SAGE Analytics International, a consulting firm that helps schools implement improvement plans. Before that, he was principal at Whitney. Previously, he was principal at Pope Elementary School, 1852 S. Albany, and an elementary teacher for more than 16 years.

He has worked closely with the United Neighborhood Organization, as did his predecessor, Louderes Monteagudo. Monteagudo created a ruckus when she tried to explain why one of her three children was enrolled in a private school. Months later, following the mayoral election, she resigned.

FLUNKING HIGHER AT MINORITY SCHOOLS

Children at predominantly black elementary schools are much more likely to flunk a grade than children at schools with fewer black students, according to an article in the October issue of The Chicago Reporter on race and poverty.

Nine of the 10 schools with the highest retention rates for June 1991 are more than 97 percent black; the other is predominantly Hispanic, the article reports. These schools failed between 8.3 and 13.4 percent of their students; citywide, the retention rate was 1.9 percent.

None of the city’s 37 predominantly white elementary schools had a retention rate higher than 4.9 percent; 24 had rates below the citywide average.

Robert Saddler, deputy superintendent for school operations, told The Reporter that the statistics reflect the effects of poverty, not race.

In September 1990, the Board of Education adopted a controversial policy that discourages retention and prohibits schools from failing a student more than once between kindergarten and eighth grade. A growing body of research shows that students who are retained are more likely to drop out of school. But critics of the board’s policy charged that it was aimed at saving money.

Lorraine V. Forte
program is to give schools discretion and control" over their budgets, he explains.

Counters Dixon: "In that case, why have Chapter 1 at all?"

The other side of the question is whether schools are spending the money in ways that increase student achievement.

"Principals must learn to be innovative," says Walter Allen, director of the board's Chapter 1 office. "This is something they've never had before. If your kids can't read or do math, you can't have people buying copiers, paper and pencils. What does that do for the educational environment?"

"Many LSCs don't have the sophistication to find good programs," acknowledges Jones. Instead, they might opt for one-day workshops or hire community residents with little or no educational background as "consultants." "That's not what the program was intended for," Jones adds.

Many principals, who take the lead in developing spending plans, are new on the job and just learning. But even experienced principals say good spending plans are difficult and time-consuming to develop.

"You have to know your students and their needs, know your community," says Janice Todd, who taught at Byrd more than 15 years before becoming principal six years ago. "Just to spend $200,000 isn't easy."

Being able to carry over funds from year to year is important for good planning, she adds. One example is her plan for a full-day pre-kindergarten.

Only seven children signed up for the program this year, and she needed at least 15 to be able to hire a full-time teacher. After careful thought, she bought some supplies and equipment and set aside money to hire a half-time teacher the second part of the school year, and has already planned for additional spending for a full-time teacher next year.

Todd also cautions that money isn't always the answer. "Our hope is that it [Chapter 1] will translate into improved learning. I'm not necessarily convinced money is the key—good teachers, parents and other things are involved. All growth is not tied directly to money."

Lorraine V. Forte is managing editor of CATALYST.

Impact of these efforts cannot easily be measured.

Also, historians, graduate students and others likely will analyze and reflect on some of the larger issues raised by foundation involvement in Chicago school reform. Some, perhaps, may be critical of the extensive foundation staff involvement in various reform activities. This intimate involvement of some staffers with colleagues in other foundations and with grant recipients may have harmed the foundations' ability to be objective about grantmaking.

To be sure, area foundations have been funding a variety of educational schemes—including the parent-involvement approach of Dr. James Comer, Ted Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools and the RE:Learning project sponsored by the Education Commission of the States. But they never seriously challenged what reform groups proposed as the main thrust of reform, site-based management.

Another issue worthy of analysis is foundations' role in sustaining and strengthening organizations that deal with education issues. Had foundations helped foster a greater variety of research and advocacy organizations prior to reform, a greater number of well-informed viewpoints may have been considered. Traditionally, though, foundations have been reactive, responding only to those who ask for money. A broader question is whether supporting advocacy and community organizations is a good investment. With staff members, rent and promotional work, they are expensive endeavors.

What analysts conclude on these issues could well affect the way foundations—both locally and across the country—approach school policy change in the future.

Boys and girls separated because the personal nature of the sessions. Each group meets once a week, but children with more severe problems might also have individual counseling sessions. About 200 children are now participating in the program.

Group sessions focus on topics such as drugs, self-esteem or avoiding gangs, but also include unstructured time. "We always make time for what they want to talk about," Alderson says. The students learn to handle problems such as how to cope with a death in the family.

Also, students who lose control in class and need "quiet time" to calm down are given the chance to sit in a counselor's office before returning to class.

"I learned that if we have problems at school, we can talk to the counselor," acknowledges Karval Williams, 10, whose cousin was killed in a gang-related shooting. "She taught me it was okay to be sad, to cry and be angry."

For more information, contact Yvonne Alderson (312) 535-5340.
RESOURCES

Council tips. “Making the Most of School Reform: Suggestions for More Effective Local School Councils” includes tips and a list of organizations providing local school council training. For a free copy of the 20-page booklet, call the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance (312) 939-2202.

LSC conflicts. Different viewpoints make for healthy debate but can lead to standoffs when local school council factions can’t agree on key decisions such as principal selection. The Lawyers’ School Reform Advisory Project provides volunteer attorneys to help resolve disputes. For more information, call the Project (312) 332-2494.

Improving learning. “Publications for Parents: Helping You Help Your Child Learn” describes 10 free or low-cost pamphlets with tips to help children do better in reading, math, science and other areas. Another pamphlet, “Making Sense of School Budgets,” covers the basics. The free guide can be ordered from the U.S. Department of Education (800) 424-1616 or (202) 219-1651.

WORKSHOPS/CONFERENCES

School improvement. “School Reform: Starting the Second Round” is the theme of a two-day conference sponsored by the Citizens Schools Committee. It will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Nov. 2 and from 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. Nov. 3 at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Center, 750 S. Halsted.

Workshop topics include student attendance, overcrowding, budgeting, grant writing and AIDS. Those on overcrowding and AIDS will be offered in Spanish. The cost is $20 for individuals and $15 for CSC members. LSCs pay $30 for two members. For more information, call Susanna Lang (312) 726-4678.

MUSEUMS

Promoting reading. Story hours with guest readers, a book fair, book-making and other activities will mark the Chicago Historical Society’s celebration of Children’s Book Week, Nov. 11-17.

An essay contest on the topic “What I Saw at the Great Chicago Fire” is also being sponsored by the Society. All entrants will receive prizes and a 10-percent discount on book fair purchases. Selected essays will be read on Book Week’s opening day, Nov. 11.

Teachers are encouraged to bring their classes to story hours and other presentations, Nov. 11-15. Reservations for seating are required. All activities are free and open to the public. For more information, call the Society (312) 642-4600.

Visiting Antarctica. Go inside a glacier, see penguins at play and watch as a never-setting sun makes a circular path through the sky. These and other dramatic scenes are shown in “Antarctica,” a film starting Oct. 18 at the Museum of Science and Industry’s OMNIMAX Theater, 57th Street and Lake Shore Drive.

A companion teacher’s guide to the film is available, covering ecology, geography, and other topics relating to the film. Ticket prices vary. For show times and to order tickets, call the Museum (312) 684-1414, ext. 2521 or (800) 468-6674.

Award

CATALYST has won its first award. It placed first in the non-academic periodicals division of the 1991 Chicago Women in Publishing competition, which recognizes publications in which women play major roles.

Correction

The October 1991 issue of CATALYST incorrectly reported the name of a North Side day-care provider in an article on literacy instruction in preschool and kindergarten. The correct name is B.J. Richards.

Deadline

To have your school-improvement resource or event considered for inclusion in Bulletins, send a note with the details and the name of a contact person and phone number. Address it to CATALYST/ Bulletins, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 500, Chicago, Ill. 60604. CATALYST is mailed the 20th day of each month; deadline for Bulletins is the 5th.